The Prosthetic Body: Disabled, Posthuman, a Cyborg, or Still Human?

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Abstract

From the middle of the twentieth century there has been a huge surge in the production and development of prosthetic devices. This transformation in prosthetic technology is a radical departure from earlier technologies, beginning in the nineteenth century, whose aim, in serving to correct a physical lack, never involved an ambition to surpass the body itself. This thesis attempts to examine the phenomenological experience of users of more recent embodied technology in the context of controversial socio-political debates around identity and care that have accompanied these changes.

By considering assistive devices like wheelchairs, crutches, frames, sticks, hearing implants and aids, alongside prosthetic body parts, such as artificial limbs, hair and breasts, this thesis examines issues around accessibility, availability, and usability. The argument seeks to foreground the vital importance of reinstating a phenomenology of living with prosthetic devices as a key criterion for designing and manufacturing prosthetics. To this end, this study critiques theoretical perspectives that have informed recent approaches to prosthesis in disabilitity studies – New Materialism, Posthumanism, and Transhumanism – arguing that such orientations serve to divert focus from individual embodied experiences to build misdirected narratives of hyper-functionality, super-cripping, and superhuman vitality.

By analysing literary and autobiographical experiences of living with physical impairments and embodied devices, this thesis demonstrates that failure and vulnerability are the primal conditions of human existence and the so-called transcendence of human vulnerability through technology is neither possible nor desirable.

Acknowledgements

I would like to offer sincere thanks to my supervisors Professor Patricia Waugh, Professor Angela Woods, and Professor Marco Bernini, whose astute comments and attention to detail have shaped this thesis into the piece that it is today. Perhaps more so than anyone else, I owe Prof Waugh a lot of gratitude for her support throughout these 4 years. Her encouragement, interest in my ideas, generosity of spirit and patience inspired me to engage in my work with utmost diligence and sincerity.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Figures:

Introduction

> Prosthesis [is an] artificial substitute for a missing part of the body. The artificial parts that are most commonly thought of as prostheses are those that replace lost arms and legs, but bone, artery, and heart valve replacements are common, and artificial eyes and teeth are also correctly termed prostheses ... The medical speciality that deals with prostheses is called prosthetics. ("Prosthesis", Encyclopaedia Britannica.com) [1]

> Modern medicine is also full of cyborgs, of couplings between organism and machine, each conceived as coded devices, in an intimacy and with a power that were not generated in the history of sexuality. (Harraway 251)[2]

> Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times. (Freud 47)[3]

> Her doctor advises her to wait for surgery until she absolutely can't stand the knee pain, because a mechanical joint last only fifteen to twenty years. Artificial joints wear out like the body parts they replace, and eventually the replacement has to be replaced. (Crosby 39)[4]

The aforementioned excerpts are variegated discourses across diverse disciplines; they resonate with the coming together of man and machine. They elaborate on the title of the thesis, 'The Prosthetic Body: Disabled, Posthuman, a Cyborg, or still Human?' by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the transition from an amputee to the disabled prosthetic, or a super-abled posthuman or cyborg.

Prosthesis has been known to humanity since antiquity; the *Science and Society Picture Library*[5] is rife with images showcasing wooden arms and legs that can be traced back to ancient Egypt and Rome. Still, the evolution of prostheses was slow and steady until the emergence of the Industrial Revolution

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1 Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. "Prosthesis". *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 1 Jul. 2019, https://www.britannica.com/science/prosthesis. Accessed 7 July 2021.

2 Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature.* Routledge, 1990. Web.

3 Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Great Ideas ; 19. Ed. McLintock, David. London: London : Penguin, 2004. Print.

4 Crosby, Christina. *A Body, Undone : Living On After Great Pain.* Sexual Cultures, 2016. Web.

5 Film and Photography Library in London. The pictures showcased are in collaboration with London's Science Museum, The National Railway Museum, York, Locomotion- the National Railway Museum, the Museum of Science and Media, and the Museum of Science and Industry.

and the Civil War that heralded an era of rapid proliferation of prostheses that were further technologically and aesthetically enhanced. This might be attributed to the unprecedented increase in amputations arising from the changed working environments of textile mills, paper factories, wind mills and the like, for these replaced manual labour with machinic excess that often led to damaging accidents and even to amputations. As the railway network grew, deadly mishaps on the tracks frequently resulted in physical impairments. The implementation of sophisticated weaponry during the Civil War also caused severe injuries wherein, due to the threat of subsequent infection, amputations seemed a better procedure than reconstructive surgery. This intimate interaction of man with machine suggested expanded horizons for collaborations between the two, so that simple wooden stumps and pegs would eventually metamorphose into more technologically enriched prostheses such as Bly's Prosthesis (1860s), and Clement's artificial leg (1876)[6].

Nineteenth century prosthesis users/wearers yearned to hide their impairments and escape the social stigma that their presumed "disability" enforced upon them. Because it was an "age of appearances"[7], often obsessed with the ideals of organic wholeness and social acceptance based on external comportment and demeanor, such prostheses were one answer to the compelling demand of concealment and external perfection. In the contemporary posthuman world, however, as I shall argue in this thesis, prosthesis has been alternatively rendered through a very different configuration of meanings. Prosthesis no longer functions as a medical object representing an obsessive aesthetic of wholeness that urgently requires the elision or camouflage of a perceived lack, nor does it redress a lost functionality; rather, prosthesis is now more entangled with assumptions concerning the desirability of hyper-functionality, machinic perfectionism, consumerist-capitalist desires, corrective curing and finally an indomitable fight against mortality and the limitations of the human form. Before enquiring further into this changing face of prosthesis in a posthuman context, however, this introduction will first trace the emergence of the concept of posthumanism, its varied perspectives and the question of how prosthesis becomes entangled with the posthuman framework.

Posthumanism, Prosthesis and the Body

6 Bly's limb was inspired by the biomechanics of the body. Bly was an anatomist who worked on human anatomy and its reproduction in artificial boy parts. Clement's artificial leg was a more sophisticated version of the former; as an 1876 circular described it " the anatomical structure of the natural limb is closely studied and perfectly reproduced" ("*Centennial Testimonials to the Clement Artificial Leg*" (3-6).

7 Ott, Katherine, Serlin, David, and Mihm, Stephen. *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives: Modern Histories of Prosthetics*. New York: New York UP, 2002. Print.

Posthumanism as a concept emerged during the Macy conferences held over the course of two decades between 1942-1961[8]. The conferences were chaired by prominent neurologists, biologists and scientists such as John von Neumann, Norbert Weiner, Gregory Bateson and Warren McCulloch, who came together to discuss the prospect and possibility of the complete neurological transfer of information from the human brain to computers and other technological devices so that human intelligence and subjectivity might be conceived as capable of being dissolved into a pure substanceless informational patterning that is claimed to substitute for and mark the dis/replacement of the human psyche and the materiality of human being.

The first conference[9] demonstrated the interaction between a human and computer interface, proposing that modern computers could perform complex mathematical calculations without the aid of human agency. The initial series of conferences reiterated the extent to which machines could mimic the workings of the human brain and culminated in the proposal that humans are nothing more than information carriers in a material embodiment, able to be "pureed" (Hayles 15) in pure data, thus negating the human form, human agency, subjectivity, affect, memory, and finally effacing the human of humanism altogether. Katherine Hayles rightly posits the starting point of the conference as a reflection upon a single question: 'if flesh is data incarnate then, why not go back to the source and leave the perils of physicality behind?' (15)[10].

It is precisely the negation of the human to make way for the machine and the machinic that marks the birth of the posthuman, as in Harraway's cyborg, 'a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction' (252)[11]. The locus of this hybridity is the material body and it is presented as bringing about an inevitable confluence of machine, medicine and the body[12]. I position my research at this critical juncture: the aim of the thesis is to examine and

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8 Von Foerster, H. M., Mead, Margaret, and Teuber, Hans Lukas. *Cybernetics: Circular Causal and Feedback Mechanisms in Biological and Social Systems: Transactions of the 8th Conference*. 1952. Print.

McCulloch, Warren S. *Embodiments of Mind*. Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1965. Print.

Heims, Steve J. *The Cybernetics Group*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991. Print.

Doyle, Richard. *On beyond Living : Rhetorical Transformations of the Life Sciences*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1997. Print.

Hayles, Katherine, and American Council of Learned Societies. *How We Became Posthuman : Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago, Ill.: U of Chicago, 1999. Print.

Raulerson, Joshua. "How We Became Post-Posthuman: Postcyberpunk Bodies and the New Materiality." *Singularities: Technoculture, Transhumanism, and Science Fiction in the 21st Century*. 2017. 39-40. Web.

9 It was held in 1941, sponsored by Josiah Macy Foundation. The key figures of the conference were Norbert Weiner, Claude Shannon, John von Neumann, Warren McCulloch. For more refer to, Katherine Hayles's *How We Became Posthuman*, Norbert Weiner's *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*.

10 Ibid,.

11 Garcia, Christien. *Donna Haraway's A Cyborg Manifesto*. The Macat Library, 2018. Print..

12 Hillman, David, Ulrika Maude, and Paul Sheehan. "Posthuman Bodies." *The Cambridge Companion to The Body in Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015. 245-60. Web.

Livingston, Ira, and Halberstam, Jack. *Posthuman Bodies*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995. Print. Unnatural Acts.

Sheehan, Paul. "Posthuman Bodies." *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*. Cambridge UP, 2015. 245-60. Web.

critique some of the consequences for the impaired phenomenological body that arise from the new posthuman entanglement.

In the chapters that follow, prosthesis functions not only as a mechanical object reflecting the compulsive veneration of technology, but also viewed as the means of an unhinged incorporation into human organs in order to enhance, augment and transform the lived body into a hyper-efficient and superlatively functional machine. The modes of exploitation effected by the prosthesis industry harness the lucrative potential of desires located at the heart of the experience and self-conceptualisation of the human body. The circulation of "super crip" images[13] of amputees and prostheses skews society's view of prosthesis users, not only propagating an insidious discursive practice of what might be termed "super" humanism, but in the process also entirely effacing the singularity of the affective experiences of those living with an impairment.

The subversive nature of "techno-fuelling of the human body" (Virilio 53)[14] has wider and deeper repercussions than have been examined by many cultural theorists and medical humanities' scholars. Posthumanism has been primarily viewed as a radical departure from the human centric tenets of humanism that maintained strict binaries around gender, sex, race, nature, culture, science, religion. Braidotti celebrates 'posthumanism [as] a move beyond these lethal binaries…which marks the decline of some fundamental premise of the Enlightenment, namely the progress of mankind through a self regulatory and teleological ordained use of reason and of secular scientific rationality allegedly aimed at the perfectibility of 'Man''(37)[15]. Donna Haraway in her seminal work *A Cyborg Manifesto* describes posthumanism as 'an effort to contribute to socialist-feminist culture and theory in a postmodernist, non-naturalist mode and in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end' (255)[16]. My intention in this thesis is neither to disregard Haraway's promise concerning the cyborg nor to undermine the agential capacity of the cyborg in implementing new modes of thinking and being; my focus however is to engage closely with those discourses that view the cyborg as a liberating construct and to the conceptualisation of what it is to be human as the human body is continually enhanced and augmented.

Murray, Stuart. *Disability and the Posthuman: Bodies, Technology, and Cultural Futures*. Liverpool University Press, 2020. Print.

13 'Supercrip can be defined as a stereotype narrative displaying the plot of someone who has "to fight against his/her impairment" in order to overcome it and achieve unlikely "success." When uncritically interpreted, this type of narrative can be regarded as positive, contesting dominant views regarding disability as "negative" and "inferior."'

Silva, Carla Filomena, and P. David Howe. "The (in)Validity of Supercrip Representation of Paralympian Athletes." *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 36.2 (2012): 178. Print.

14 Virilio, Paul. *Open Sky*. London: London : Verso, 1997. Print.

15 Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity, 2013. Print.

16 Ibid,.

Performance artists such as Orlan[17], and Stelarc[18] reiterate to parodic excess the plastic and experimental possibilities of the body subjected to prosthetic enhancement or redefinition. Orlan underwent multiple surgeries to change her appearance, asserting 'this is my body, this is my software', (Goodall 155). Stelarc, on the other hand, believes in augmenting the body to attain a state of "hyper functionality" where the body can attach itself to a machinic interface of multiple legs and hands all operated by computer software and the Internet. He claims: 'these performances address the questions, can we consider a body that can function with neither memory nor desire? And is it possible to navigate the world…displaced from the cultural spaces … of emotion and of personal experience' (Zurbrugg 111)[19]. Surely though, such questions are not just reflective of the posthuman ethos of 'I can, therefore, I am' (Celia 3),[20] but they also bear on the question of the performance, reception and function of medical practices and attitudes towards prosthesis. In similarly ignoring or dismissing the significance of the lived personal experience of prosthesis, they may also function to promote the disregard of what is at stake in the human experience of living with a prosthesis, the adaptation and adjustment involved and the complex range of affects which accompany and mediate such adaptation.

The first two quotations that head this chapter foreground the functional utility of prosthesis coupled with its seemingly ubiquitous presence in contemporary medicine; the two passages that follow highlight the personal experiences of wearing prostheses to reveal a stark contrast with either the promised restoration of functionality or the commencement of a cyborgian future. Even though neither of these two extracts depict a prosthetic attachment that "replaces" an amputation or a physical and sensorial impairment, they still express suffering, the sheer discomfort and misery that prostheses may bring with them. They also help to raise questions such as: Does the modern prosthetic body actually materialize dominant discourses of unlimited ability and hyper functionality? Are subjectivity, affect, and memory dispensable? Does the body-technology integration replicate/replace the body mind connect? Are attunement, proprioception, spatio-temporal organization of the body insignificant? Are people with prostheses really being "corrected"? Do they feel superhuman? What is the place of the impaired body and its experience in current prevalent socio-cultural, medical and discursive scenarios?

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17 Stelarc is a Cyprus born performance artist. He has been working on exploring the functional possibilities of the body through technological extensions. He has been active since the early 1980s. There are several YouTube videos showcasing his experimentations with his body. The links to which are prpvided below:
https://youtu.be/6z_CK6Fm4_g
https://youtu.be/ZNdV8Ilw9Nc
https://youtu.be/TqtiM1hK6lU

18 Orlan is a French performance artist whose series of surgeries beginning in1990 went live from the operation theatre. This surgical procedure comprising ten operations on her face was titled *The Reincarnation of Saint Orlan.* After this she was to acquire 'the chin of Venus, the nose of Psyche, the eyes of Diana, the lips of Europa and the brow of Mona Lisa' (Goodall 155).

19 Featherstone, Mike. *Body Modification*. London: SAGE, 2000. Print.

20 Lury, Celia. Prosthetic Culture : *Photography, Memory and Identity*. International Library of Sociology. London: London : Routledge, 1998. Print.

This thesis seeks to answer such questions with a particular focus on sensory and physical impairments as depicted in literary fiction, dramas, short stories, audio diaries and life writing. Agreeing with Ott's contention that 'the line between assistive and prosthetic technology is more like a hyphen' (21)[21], I will examine representations of prosthetic attachments such as bionic hands and limbs, artificial eyes, prosthetic breasts, hearing aids and implants, and artificial hip joints as well as assistive aids such as crutches, frames, sticks and wheelchairs. The research for the thesis suggests that to reduce the body to a fleshy composite of separate machines conjoined to form a purely intelligent, function-driven machinery that might be repaired and augmented, is to disavow the intricate mechanisms of the body-mind connect which are orientated towards sensing and feeling, performativity and movement, kinesthesis and proprioception, geography and space, learning and memory, healing and adaptation, and an unending chain of failure. Recent scholarship on prosthesis has overlooked these embodied iterations and has instead conceptualized embodied technology within a disembodied, metaphorical paradigm. The proceeding section shall recount various key connotations of the term prosthetic as these are configured across multiple disciplines.

Prosthesis: Conceptions Across Disciplines

> As I engage a variety of recent work in arts and humanities, I am both startled and amused at the extraordinary moves made of and by "the prosthetic" of late – particularly since my prosthetic leg can barely stand on its own and certainly will never go out dancing without me. (Sobchack 18)[22]

As illustrated by Sobchack, it is indeed surprising to come across a variety of projections of prosthesis and the prosthetic emerging from diverse disciplines and fields of knowledge. The idea of the prosthetic has so charmed and fascinated scholars that it seems now to function more as an abstract entity with infinite multi-dimensional configurations. Despite being exhaustively employed by linguists, as well as cultural and literary critics[23], the term "prosthesis" seems to be continuously associated with fresh metaphors, connotations, similes and personifications.

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21 Ott, Katherine, Serlin, David, and Mihm, Stephen. *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives : Modern Histories of Prosthetics*. New York: New York UP, 2002. Print.

22 Smith, Marquard, and Joanne Morra. *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006. Print.

23 Mitchell and Snyder in their book, *Narrative Prosthesis* discuss how disabled characters in literature function as prosthetic devices to add 'representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight' (49). Mark Wigley, an architect says ' when the border between "foreign" and "native" – the cultural and the natural, the political and the cultural, the social and the political – can no longer be readily justified or perhaps even maintained, we have entered "prosthetic territory"' (Brahm 2)

The prevailing discursive, scholarly practices around it, though diverse in perspective, primarily, however, depict the concept in a metaphorical light. In his critical work *Prosthesis,* David Wills writes about his amputee father and situates prosthesis within the domain of language and writing; he positions the concept in what he calls a "triple juncture" betwixt his father's missing leg, his subsequent struggles with it, and Wills's own endeavour to write a book on prosthesis, 'whatever there is of a wooden leg comes to be contained within the bounds of this writing, that there is only in fact a *Prosthesis* that happens to be composed, in part, of an account of a father's prosthesis' (10). Therefore, for him, prosthesis performs the function of structure that supports the edifice of the whole ensemble of writing. In the same vein, Mitchell and Snyder in their book, *Narrative Prosthesis,* discuss how disabled characters in literature function as prosthetic devices to add 'representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight' (49). Similarly, cultural theorists Celia Lury[24] and Jennifer Gonzalez[25] delineate prostheses as those objects, artifacts and personal belongings that most accurately preserve an individual or a culture's sense of personal identity. Here prosthesis functions as an intangible object that metonymically supplements for an absence. Researchers coming from the fields of media and information technology metaphorically use the term to signify those devices that augment and enhance the senses not so much by restoring a deficiency but by engaging the senses to such an extent that technology impinges upon bodily materiality and requires a conscious subjective engagement. Since technologies such as the typewriter, phone, gramophone, radio, phonograph, television, film, and computer screen are largely 'modeled on the body – particularly the deficient body, the telephone emerging from a research on the mechanism of the ear…film from persistence of vision,' (Armstrong 81)[26]– they are often alluded to as those "prosthetic" expansions that impinge upon our existent senses and involve our neurological transfer and subjective withdrawal into them. Analogously, Paul Virilio asserts that astronomic telescope and visual lenses are prosthetic devices since 'they project an image of a world beyond our reach' (25)[27], thus blurring the boundaries between foreign and native**,** specific location and virtual travel. In fact, in current discourses any knowledge gained through the operation of technology might be termed "prosthetic knowledge"; this encompasses

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In a similar vein, Paul Virilio asserts that astronomic telescope, visual lenses are all prosthetic devices since 'they project an image of a world beyond our reach' (25), thus blurring the boundaries between foreign and native**,** specific location and virtual travel.

Virilio, Paul. *The Vision Machine.* Bloomington, Ind. : London: Indiana UP ; British Film Institute, 1994. Print.

24 Lury focuses on photography that brings back old memories and preserves a persona that even though no more exists could easily be brought back, maintained and sustained; she calls this the 'prosthetic culture'.

25 Likewise, Gonzalez attributes 'prosthetic memories' as those memories that are evoked by judiciously curated personal possessions 'which [do] not include all personal property but only those objects seen to signify an individual identity…The autobiographical object thus becomes a prosthetic device: an addition, a trace and a replacement for the intangible aspects of desire, identification and social relations' (134).

26 Armstrong, Tim. *Modernism, Technology, and the Body : A Cultural Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.

27 Virilio, Paul. *Open Sky.* London: London : Verso, 1997. Print

online tutorials, surfing for useful information on the internet, distance education, educational blogs, vlogs etc[28]. In this view, any contact with technology – either as tangible devices or intangible data – therefore reconstitutes the human as prosthetic, superhuman or cyborg.

But a further interpretation of prosthesis emerges in conjunction with the previous one, for this goes on to effectively categorise any external tool use by humans as prosthetic. The philosopher of mind and neuroscience Andy Clark has used this idea to explore and establish the concept of the "extended mind", a phenomenon in which the boundaries between the "skin, skull" are breached[29]. By way of example, he elucidates how a person with dementia might use his diary for assistance and therefore as a scaffold for and eventually as part of his memory, so that the diary becomes an external extension of himself though and on which the person depends for his sense of identity and agency in the world; here the diary as prosthesis is seen to make up for a deficiency, but it eventually becomes fully part of mind. Likewise, Clark regards language as a prosthetic attachment that serves as a vehicle for articulating phatic and haptic ideas; on the other hand, any tool use within this paradigm signifies the blurring of external and internal worlds, designating an outer alignment that in some way or other aids, strengthens, engages and extends human capacity (11-15)[30].

The overarching idea surrounding each of these interpretations is the notion that prosthesis is anything that calls for a dispersal of the heretofore hegemonic dualisms of internal/ external, self/body, artificial/real, absence/presence, flesh/metal, nature/culture and so on. Crossing the demarcations of disciplines too, prosthesis has transformed into a free-floating signifier that might be and is employed in myriad ways not always compatible with each other. It broadly functions as a 'foreign element that reconstructs that which cannot stand upon on its own, at once propping up extending its host … always structural, establishing the place it appears to add to' (Wills 20)[31]. With the intention of challenging Wills's observation, however, the view put forward in this thesis is that the foreignness of prosthesis in these multifarious manifestations arises out of the distance it has travelled in its interdisciplinary journeys and its subsequent alienation therefore from its original domain of meaning. Although this study is immensely indebted to critical insights endemic in these readings, it tries not to lose sight of

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28 A 2016 post on the *Dictionary of Digital Humanities* defines 'information that a person does not know, but can access as needed using technology' as 'prosthetic knowledge'. This term has since been popularised on social media platforms namely, Twitter, and Tumbler. Posted by Eva, on 9 March 2016, Dictionary of Digital Humanities, https://medium.com/dictionary-of-digital-humanities/prosthetic-knowledge-bbb111fa4e35. Accessed 7 July, 2021.

29 In his essay *The Extended Mind,* he postulates this concept. This is followed by two books where he refines the concept. They are titled– *Microcognition: Philosophy, Cognitive Science and Parallel Distributed Processing* (1989), *Associative Engines: Connectionism, Concepts and Representational Change* (1993)

30 Clark, Andy, and David Chalmers. "The Extended Mind." *Analysis* 58.1 (1998): 7-19. Print.

31 Wills, David. *Prosthesis.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1995. Print.

their metaphorical misappropriations, for these metaphorical transfers have effaced the literal meaning of prosthesis which is still tied to its medical function and whose site is therefore the amputated/impaired biological body. The most poignant feature of this metaphoric displacement is a misguided semantic transfer that effectively renders all of human experience prosthetic but neglectfully segregates those who, like Sobchack, 'give it literal (even exhaustible) vitality' (17)[32]. This thesis will therefore examine the "literality" of the concept as it is lived and embedded in the phenomenological body-mind continuity and contiguity. This return to the embodied subject is intended as a critique of the currently dominant discursive practice around prosthesis that largely circles around the aforementioned metaphors and the deleterious narratives around them in which prostheses act as harbingers of a utopian, or dystopian future. Here the focus will be circumscribed to the material body as a way of engaging the situatedness and actual experiential locatedness of life with prosthesis as it is performed and enacted.

The thesis therefore engages the literal or actual experiential site, that is, the body, where the impairment/ amputation occurs and where successive prosthetisization takes place. I argue, that there is a wide chasm between the pre and post-amputated, pre and post (sensory) impaired body, but it is not informed by a disruption caused by an in-between-ness of being organic/ artificial, typical or differently abled body. Rather the argument to be developed here is that this gulf is located in the phenomenological dimension of the individual body whose spatio-temporal constitution, proprioception, learnt and acquired ontological givens, are disintegrated as a consequence of impairment and subsequent prosthesis. Such disintegration is experienced in disturbed physical movement, recurrent ordeals of failing and falling, disintegrated relationships, and is affectively felt in the form of excruciating phantom pains. The literature dealing with prosthetic experience – both fiction and non-fiction – is suffused with visceral expressions of such crucial affective phenomena of sense, sensation and movement. My thesis explores the mechanisms underlying body-prosthesis confluence from a phenomenological, and an embodied and anthropocentric perspective that endeavours to demonstrate the futility of deeming machines as purely corrective tools superseding human limitations, or as animate entities imbued with individual agency.

The Case for Anthropocentrism in the Midst of Vital Materialism

32 Sobchack, Vivian. *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. 1st ed., University of California Press, 2004. Print.

More relevant to this research is the way so many investigators explore the subject of a burgeoning technologization with absolute disregard for the relevance of human embodiment, agency, will and consciousness in upgrading, updating and manufacturing the latest technological breakthroughs. Theorists like Bruno Latour, Karen Barad, Diana Coole, and Jane Bennet, for example, have extensively delved into the human-machine interface only to attribute power, agency, consciousness and action to material objects[33]. Moreover, even recent understandings of technology and embodiment have promulgated a perspective privileging the former over the latter[34]. Attributing to themselves the descriptors "posthuman" and "transhuman" these theories deleteriously and often blindly exhume the human from their turf heralding what might be described as an era of techno-fetishism where technology is seen not only to far outdo the material body with its limitations, but also to wield and therefore offer more agential freedom as it impacts human bodies and minds. These rapidly proliferating misinterpretations of technology have pervaded the domain of common understanding, so much so that their confounding assumptions often go unchecked. The realm that is most adversely affected perhaps by the recent turn to this newest "vital" materialism is that of disability, discourses around prosthetics, and the place of the human in relation to a changing environment.

Steven Kurzmann, a below-the knee-amputee, remarks that this shift from the subject (amputee) to the object (prosthesis) means a precarious 'transfer [of] agency (albeit not subjectivity, as with the cyborg) from human actors to human artifacts' (380)[35]. Such reductive engagement signals how metaphorical extensions of prosthesis as well as reductionist mechanical accounts limit analysis of the depth of physical, cognitive and perceptual immersion in the surrounding world. This thesis therefore examines the intermingled nature of the intricate mechanisms and discourses that are constantly at work between our being and becoming in the world which requires an anthropocentric approach that is equally informed by phenomenology. My intention is to elaborate and critically engage the aforementioned vogueish theoretical constructs, i.e., antihumanism, posthumanism, transhumanism and the new materialisms, in order to reveal the necessity of reinstating an anthropocentric perspective towards prosthetics and disability. In doing so, this study proposes an ethical understanding of anthropocentrism and humanism which, instead of establishing the superiority of the human, shall

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33 Coole, Diana H., and Frost, Samantha. *New Materialisms : Ontology, Agency, and Politics.* Durham [NC]; London: Duke UP, 2010. Print.

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter : a Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2010. Web.

Latour, Bruno., et al. *Reassembling the Social : an Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press, 2005. Print.

Barad, Karen Michelle. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC ; London, England: Duke UP, 2007. Print.

34 These understandings will be explored and critiqued in Chapter 3.

35 Kurzman, Steven L. "Presence and Prosthesis: A Response to Nelson and Wright." *Cultural Anthropology* 16.3 (2001): 374-87. Print.

propound the need to establish its centrality under the rubric of embodied differences, vulnerability and limitations.

Phenomenology and its Intersections with Disability Studies

These themes shall be navigated by mapping the crossroads between phenomenology and disability studies. Under the framework of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), and subsequent works in phenomenology such as Shaun Gallagher's *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (2006) and *The Phenomenological Mind* (2007); Matthew Ratcliffe's *Feelings of Being* (2008); and Havi Carel's *Phenomenology of Illness* (2016) –, the thesis reinstates the body as central to our perpetual interaction with the world. Phenomenology is particularly relevant to such an inquiry for it heralds subjecthood and personhood as integral parts in designing and conceptualizing embodied technology whilst also offering avenues for constructively critiquing and aligning it with the two dominant models of disability studies: the social and medical model. The latter reiterates physical impairment and embodied lack as a potent source of disabilities. The medical model hinges on locating disabilities at the level of corporeal lack but one which tends to erase social influences. In stark contrast, the social model[36] emphasises disability as a societal construct, albeit often bearing negligible relation with biological realities. The Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in the 1970s proposed the first definition of disability as a societal manifestation, declaring:

> In our view it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society (75)[37].

Disability scholars such as Tom Shakespeare, Marian Corker, Mitchell and Snyder[38], Ato Quayson[39], and Lennard Davis[40] are stalwart proponents of the social model. The two former writers have been explicit in their claim that this model 'makes a distinction between disability and

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36 For a thorough analysis, go to Tom Shakespeare's "The Social Model of Disability" in Davis, Lennard J. *The Disability Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.

37 Schillmeier, Michael. *Rethinking Disability: Bodies, Senses, and Things*. Routledge, 2010. Print

38 For more on this read: Mitchell, David T., and Snyder, Sharon L. *Narrative Prosthesis : Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Michigan: Ann Arbor, U of Michigan, 2000. Print. Corporealities.

Mitchell, David T., and Sharon L. Snyder. *The Biopolitics of Disability: Neoliberalism, Ablenationalism, and Peripheral Embodiment*. University of Michigan Press, 2015. Print.

39 Quayson, Ato. *Aesthetic Nervousness : Disability and the Crisis of Representation*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007. Web.

40 For more read: Davis, Lennard J. *Enforcing Normalcy : Disability, Deafness, and the Body*. London ; New York: Verso, 1995. ACLS Humanities E-Book. Web.

Davis, Lennard J. *The End of Normal: Identity in a Biocultural Era*. University of Michigan Press, 2013. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.5608008. Accessed 8 July 2021.

impairment, similar to the feminist distinction between gender and sex'; and that 'it sees disability as socially created or constructed on top of impairment and places the explanation of its changing character in the social and economic structure and culture of the society in which it is found' (3)[41]. The discernible conflict between the two models has culminated in the social model gaining precedence over its medical counterpart, especially in humanities and medical humanities contexts. Lennard Davis, originally a literary scholar, augmented the former by enunciating the end of normalcy and touting for the era of "dismodernism"[42] in which all embodiments are considered disabled irrespective of their embodied limitations.

Dismodernism is deconstructed in the Chapter 2 of the thesis, which looks into its legitimacy by analysing the concept in light of Beckett's dramatic works. This literary criticism is carried out in simultaneity with Ato Quayson's conception of "aesthetic nervousness" in which disability is said to conjure the 'suspension, collapse, or general short-circuiting of . . . dominant protocols of representation that may have governed a text' (26)[43] This study looks deeper into these presuppositions and aims to make a more nuanced contribution to the existing reserve of literary, cultural and theoretical scholarship within disability studies. The confluence between the aforementioned diverse modes of enquiry facilitates navigation into the human-machine interface, and establishes fluid entanglements between the biological realities of the body, the machinic objecthood of machines, and the subjecthood of human individuals. This approach also enables a critique that probes deeper into what Kurzman calls "technologization" – 'in a sense, technologization is about the embodied dialogue between the experience of prostheses and the observation of their biomechanical interaction with bodies, and how prosthetists and amputees communicate across this gap' (245)[44]– without subsuming it under facile metamorphisations, and techno-fetishist discourses of super-humanism and the supercrip.

Supercrip Athleticism V/s Samuel Beckett's Poetics of Failure, Exhaustion and Persistence

The 20th century playwright and author Samuel Beckett's conception of indefatigable motion and embodied lack configures the foundational paradigm for this thesis. Beckett's portrayal of hyper-reflexivity, effort, exhaustion, tardiness and countless permutations[45], expand and ramify throughout the chapters. The author's focus on failure as the most vital and intrinsic element of animate life

41 Corker, Mairian., and Shakespeare, Tom. *Disability/postmodernity : Embodying Disability Theory*. London: Continuum, 2002. Print.

42 This concept will be extensively explored and critiqued in Chapter 2.

43 Quayson, Ato. *Aesthetic Nervousness : Disability and the Crisis of Representation*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007. Web.

44 Ott, Katherine, Serlin, David, and Mihm, Stephen. *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives : Modern Histories of Prosthetics*. New York: New York UP, 2002. Print.

45 These themes will be extensively explored in Chapter 1 and 2.

undercuts the notion of unfailing athletic rigour. These ideas bear crucial significance for they fortify the central premise of this thesis and also bring to the fore why we need a deep understanding of failure and vulnerabilities to better traverse machine-body interaction in an era saturated with the ethos of vital materialism where failure to operate machinically is perceived to be a manifestation of the machine's agential revenge upon its human operator. Beckett's novels function as counter-narratives to these tendencies, for they show a myriad of characters, each constituting some form of physical impairment, who nonetheless continue to move despite the discernible challenges of undertaking long journeys. Beckett's exhaustive directory of physical ailments shows that each and every mode of physicality must be appreciated for its own sake. Even if one person is slower than the other and requires more bodily awareness to undertake an otherwise easy movement, it is not because one is more able than the other but because every individual differs from another in his/her repertoire of kinetic potential and abilities, and that every corporeality represents its own individuality, thereby curtailing the practise of collectivising labelling of disabilities under one umbrella term.

Beckett's dramatic works are vehement portrayals of individualised expressions of typical and disabled embodiments. The selected plays engaged in the thesis are stark exemplars of the hermetic remaking of disabilities, where each body is imbued with its own speciality and, likewise, its own characteristic mode of failure. Unlike the novels which sketch a lengthy description of gaits and bodies, Beckett's drama is replete with non-linguistic embodied performances of physical deficiencies, which stand out as individual and potent stage images forming powerful critiques of Davis's "dismodernism" and Quayson's claims of "aesthetic nervousness". The visual and aural images conjure up spectacles incorporating both material worlds (things and tools) and materiality in entanglement with each other. In so doing, Beckett's plays configure the edifice upon which this thesis progresses to make a sustained analyses of technological and embodied landscapes as they function in the current scenario. Moreover, the myriad entanglements of matter with materiality in the select plays and in their underlying symbolic relevance pave the way for further investigations into the nature of these entanglements. Thus, Beckett's works constitute the point of departure for the forthcoming sections of the study which shall examine the transmuting conceptualisation of matter – namely different kinds of prosthetic devices – and their impact upon the wider understanding of disability, corporeality and technology.

Navigating Literary and Autobiographical Phenomenology: A Note on the Interconnectivity and Divergences between the Texts

The range of texts in this thesis covers diverse genres namely, fantasy fiction, crime thrillers, critical biography, literary fiction, non-fiction, plays, biographical plays, audio diaries and short stories. The selection is intended to offer multiple perspectives on prosthetisation in order to promote a more nuanced understanding of what it means to have or be a prosthetised body. Here both literary and non-literary works are juxtaposed to show the unexplored interactions that exist between mediated and abstract representations of literary art, and the more direct and personal experiences of memoirs. The variety of primary sources in this thesis gives expression to the often unspoken experiences of people with disabilities hailing from diverse backgrounds and age groups namely: young and middle aged amputees; the Deaf community; people with sight loss; people using wheelchairs, crutches, sticks and hip joints; mastectomy survivors. Such an approach foregrounds the experiential and affective dimension and cultural meanings of prosthesis in order to challenge the diffidence of normative body image culture or the attitude towards prosthesis as a now easily facilitated technological solution. It proposes a biomedical ethic that is founded on empathy towards the phenomenological body, and the humane dimension of people with disabilities who wear embodied technology.

Fiction, in particular, with its focus on the embodied and embedded human subject in its multifarious dimensions becomes indispensable to biomedicine whose subject is the human body, but all too often rendered in objectified form. Yet this human body is conduit for the human being living in the world and finding meaningfulness in that experience. It exemplifies what Maya Angelou once observed concerning the importance of literature, when she argued, 'the fact is that…[writers] are using some made up names, and made-up people and made-up places, and made-up times, but they are telling the truth about the human being, what we are capable of'[46]. This thesis opens avenues for putting together fictional and non-fictional truths concerned with portraying the complexity of the human subject as it has been engaged through existential, political, phenomenological and biological discourses of being and lived experience. The collaboration between the experiential real of autobiographies, and the non-experiential and non-epistemic Real of literature suggests how the two realms align and misalign with each other. This thesis will be the first study to intertwine the two perspectives, and to make observations on the methods and approaches to prosthetisation that departs from domains such as metaphorisation, war literature, sci-fi books and movies[47].

46 Plimpton G. The art of fiction CXIX: Maya Angelou. *The Paris Review*. 1990;32(116):144. http://ezphost.dur.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/magazines/art-fiction-cxix-maya-angelou/docview/219451563/se-2?accountid=14533.

47 For more on this check: Boxall, Peter. *The Prosthetic Imagination: A History of the Novel as Artificial Life*. 2020. Web

A Note on the Texts and the Kinds of Prosthetic Devices Deployed

This section shall expound the reasons behind the selection of specific texts and prosthetic technology in the thesis and especially the deployment of lesser-known literary texts in chapter 3 and chapter 4. These chapters analyse texts that are not part of the established literary cannon: R.V Cassill's *The Father* (1962); Joanne Greenberg's *In this Sign* (1976); Rosellen Brown's *Tender Mercies (*1978*)*; Patrick McGrath's *Dr. Haggard's Disease* (1993); and Robert Pobi's *City of Windows* (2019). Owing to their visceral delineation of prosthetic devices and the experience of living with them, these texts bring to the fore the embodied, psychological, and interpersonal ordeals and challenges of wielding embodied technology – which is never as efficacious as its deemed to be. Moreover, these literary portrayals unearth the need to redefine and reconfigure the concepts of transcendence and hypermateriality within the realm of prosthetics – explicitly explored in Chapter 4. The centrality of prosthesis and life with impairments in these texts promulgate an informed understanding of what it means to fail despite wearing and welding the most expensive and technologically superior devices. In so doing they reinforce the overarching thematic concern of this thesis which is to emphasize and reinstate ethical anthropocentrism within the socio-cultural and medical substructures of prosthetic technology.

The range of technology studied in the thesis is intended to amplify this argument. In alignment with Ott's remark on the blurry distinctions between assistive technology (AT) and prosthetic devices, this thesis commences its inquiry from manual and visible AT like wheelchair, crutches, frames, and sticks, and augments it toward bionic and invisible devices like hearing implants and aids, and hip joints. Chapter 4 amplifies this trajectory further by analysing the literary and autobiographical delineations of prosthetic tools like bionic limbs, artificial eyes, breasts, and wigs in light of techno-fetishism, hyperrealism and the aestheticism of fashion design. Such an array of technology both manual and bionic allows for both the the benign and deleterious aspects of the burgeoning automation of prosthetics to be examined as well as questions of agency, ownership, accessibility, design and function that are being vigorously contested. This thesis attempts meticulously to build up its critical

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Stuart Murray's *Disability and the Posthuman: Bodies, Technology, and Cultural Futures.* Liverpool University Press, 2020. *Web.*

Katherine Hayles's *How We Became Posthuman : Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics.* Chicago, Ill.: U of Chicago, 1999. Print.

On war novels: Aaron Shaheen's *Great War Prostheses in American Literature and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford UP USA - OSO, 2020. Web.

trajectory where the historical and cultural resonances of the said devices will be examined within the chapters alongside close textual analyses.

Chapter Layout

This thesis is divided into two major parts, each comprising two chapters . The thematic concern of each chapter is with the analysis of the impaired and failing body as it is lived and experienced in depictions in the literary and autobiographical resources examined in the chapters. The recurring leitmotif is the claim that failure and limitation are intrinsic to embodied existence, even when they become rivetted to autonomous and computerised machines. The first section focusses exclusively on Samuel Beckett's works and is key in establishing the resonance and significance of Beckett's poetics of failure to rethinking the body in light of disability studies and bioethics. The second part of the thesis extends the ideas of the preceding one by assimilating them within postmodern approaches to technology, materiality, agency, consciousness, fetishisation and hyperrealism.

Chapter one discusses Beckett's texts, *Murphy* (1938*), Watt* (1953*), Molloy* (1955*), Malone Dies* (1956), *The Unnamable* (1958*),* within a framework of movement studies and phenomenology. This chapter foregrounds hyper-reflexivity in order to engage Beckett's acute awareness of the kinesthetic precision of human bodily posture, motion, and gestures, along with their emotive, ethical and empathic resonances. This chapter analyses the indispensability of motion – however minute– in Beckett's fiction in order to delineate how the seed of motion which persists in his ever devolving and failing creatures also seeps into the narrative itself, which continues to progress even in the absence of language. This chapter examines some of the many permutations of movement and language that recur throughout the novels, and in so doing tries to show how Beckett's works offer counter narratives to those of the contemporary milieu of the "super-crip" where "epistemic injustice" and "heuristic gaps" leave movement normative, singular, misunderstood and under-explored. The vast array of Beckett's shaking, walking, limping, staggering, falling and crawling characters manifest the material and performative aspect of the body which continues to persist even when pushed to the brink of exhaustion and fatigue.

The second chapter looks into Beckett's plays: *Waiting for Godot (1956); All that Fall (1957); Endgame (1958); Happy Days (1963);* and *Rough for Theater I (1976).* In this chapter, the focus is on the embeddedness of corporeality in its material worlds. Here the shift from the longer canvas of fiction to the more immediate, limited and choreographed space of theatre demonstrates the power of theatre in creating powerful and visceral images of embodied differences, triggering the performance of those

non-assimilable differences within the constricted and measured world of stagecraft. Analogous to the novels, Beckett's drama is also suffused with reckless activity demonstrating physically impaired characters trying their best to attune themselves with their immediate surroundings. However, unlike the novels, in the plays, Beckett often stages two characters in perpetual struggle to form some sort of mutual alliance of cooperation. The antagonism of the so called "pseudo couples" of Beckett drama offers a sustained critique of Davis's proposition of "dis-modernism" while simultaneously proposing an aesthetics of absorption and discrimination where the visual spectacles of embodied differences refuse incorporation within the textual fabric (form and content) of the plays. In considering these specific nuances of drama, this chapter will explore the idea that in Beckett's plays, matter – props and assistive technology – and materiality commingle to conjure up a performative landscape in which disabled and typical embodiments constitute specificity of individual differences, and in effect lend credence to Hamm's assertion in *Endgame* : 'to everyman his speciality' (97)[48]

Chapter three focusses on impairments, both physical and sensory, in light of visible and non-visible assistive technology – hip pins, hip replacements, hearing aids, wheelchairs, crutches, sticks, Zimmer frames and the like – through their representation in a range of recent fictions and other kinds of prose writing. The chapter examines fictional texts like Joanne Greenberg's *In this Sign* (1976), Rosellen Brown's *Tender Mercies (*1978*)*, Patrick McGrath's *Dr. Haggard's Disease* (1993), James Kelman's *How late It Was How Late* (1994), JM Coetzee's *Slow Man* (2005*)*, David Lodge's *Deaf Sentence* (2008); as well as autobiographical writing or memoirs such as Gail Caldwell's *New life No Instructions (2014)*, John M Hull's audio memoirs, entitled *Notes on Blindness* (2016), Crosby's *A body Undone* (2018*)*, and Noel Holston's *Life After Deaf* (2019*)*. Here the fictional delineations of manifold interactions between disability and assistive technology are simultaneously juxtaposed with their autobiographical illustrations depicting the phenomenological authenticity of these texts, and the permeability and fluidity between different genres. This chapter puts forth a detailed analysis of posthumanism and transhumanism and their impact upon postmodern understanding of machine, matter and disabilities. The critical trajectory of the chapter shall, hopefully, make a strong case for revising humanism, not in order to welcome a future without the human, but to think along the tenets of ethical anthropocentrism, especially in the arena of medical devices. In turn this chapter will contribute to the formation of a more nuanced conceptualisation of agency and anthropomorphisation, while also ultimately providing a tool to navigate the emergence of failure especially when it occurs as a consequence of body-machine collaboration.

48 Beckett, Samuel. *The Complete Dramatic Works*. London: Faber, 2006. Print.

The last chapter continues the critique of the supercrip culture in a technology-obsessed landscape and again shows how both vulnerability, failure and hyper-reflexivity might instead be regarded as mechanisms of rehabilitation. This chapter specifically focusses on artificial body parts like limbs, eyes, breasts and hair, all of which are visible aspects of the body. The range of texts covered in this chapter traverse diverse categories such as the fantastic, the uncanny, thriller, crime fiction, sci-fi, cyberpunk, critical biography, autobiography and biography. This range of texts is intended to furnish a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural and political forces that influence the development of medical technologies. The selected texts include novels such as: JG Ballard's *Cras*h (1973), David Foster Wallace's *The Broom of the System* (1987), Catherine Dunn's *Geek Lov*e (1989), and Robert Pobi's *City of Windows* (2019). Prosthetics also appear in dramatic texts namely, Orson Welles's *Moby Dick Rehearsed* (1955), Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* (1978), and April De Angelis's *Soft Vengeance* (1984). Also included are short stories: Flannery O'Connor's *Good Country People* (1955), and R.V Cassill's *The Father* (1962). Non-fictional texts also explore prosthetics: such as Oliver Sacks's *A Leg to Stand On (*1984), Josh Sundquist's *Just Don't Fall* (2010), Lisa Lynch's *The C Word* (2010), and Lauren Scruggs's *Still LoLo: A Spinning Propeller, a Horrific Accident, and a Family's Journey of Hope* (2013). The profusion of genres itself instantiates human proclivities towards exploring and exploiting the narrative and phenomenal potentialities lurking behind body-technology alliances.

The chapter also looks into the delineations of artificial body parts under technofetishism, technoanimism, and techno-synergism. Not only does it examine illustrations of different types of limbs but also puts forth a brief historico-literary overview of the changing face of embodied technology from the late nineteenth century to the present. Furthermore, this chapter examines representations of the functional, aesthetic, and ergonomic attributes of modern day prosthetics and investigates the challenges that both amputees and prosthetists encounter in the designing and donning of an artificial body part. In so doing, the central claim of the final chapter is to argue that a phenomenological and fashion – not fetish – stimulated perspective will add a novel dimension to embodied technology where prosthetics will configure as stylish accessories and appendages – not "enchanted matter"– and where the subjecthood of the individual and objecthood of the body will be of equal significance in what Steven Kurzman calls "technologization".

Chapter 1: Beckett and the Expansive Minimalism of Movement

All before. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better. (Knowlson 674)[49]

The epigram to this chapter serves the dual purpose of establishing the thematic concern of Beckett's oeuvre and concomitantly furnishes the premise of its argument. Critical analyses on Beckett have tended to subsume his works under the umbrella of existentialist philosophy, phenomenology, Cartesian critique, disability studies, and linguistic inquiries into the themes of the failure of language and the unreliability of memory. Predominantly, this scholarship portrays the progression of Beckett's narratives towards their analysis of conditions of indolence, minimality, decay, hopelessness, and doom[50]. This chapter aims to diverge from this pervasive approach, to suggest that Beckett's narrative strategies, though seemingly pessimistic, chronicle equally forceful themes of persistence and resilience, which thereby, depicts an unceasing becoming of humanity – a refusal to give up the fight.

The present chapter looks at Beckett's texts, *Murphy* (1938*), Watt* (1953*), Molloy* (1955*), Malone Dies* (1956), *The Unnamable* (1958*),* from the perspective of movement studies, while simultaneously employing work in phenomenology[51] and the concept of hypereflexivity[52] in order to engage and foreground Beckett's acute awareness of the kinesthetic precision of human bodily posture, motion, and gestures, along with their emotive, ethical, and empathetic resonance. In so doing, this chapter will delineate how the multifaceted attributes of movement, as evident in Beckett's texts, are employed to

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49 Knowlson, James. *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett.* London: Bloomsbury, 1996. Print.

50 Ardoin, Paul. "Deleuze's Monstrous Beckett: Movement and Paralysis." *Jml: Journal of Modern Literature* 38.2 (2015): 134-49. Web.

Bernini, Marco. "Crawling Creating Creatures: On Beckett's Liminal Minds." *European Journal of English Studies* 19.1 (2015): 39-54. Web.

Lin, Lidan. "Labor, Alienation, and the Status of Being: The Rhetoric of Indolence in Beckett's Murphy." *Philological Quarterly* 79.2 (2000): 249-271. Web.

" " ."Beckett's Bodies in the Trilogy, or Life as a Pensum." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 27.1 (2018): 69-82. Web.

Maude, Ulrika. *Beckett, Technology and the Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

Sheehan, Paul. "No Direction Home: Molloy , Travelogue, and Nomadic Modernism." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 26.1 (2017): 24-38. Web.

51Heidegger, and Husserl were the first wave phenomenologists, who advocated for the mind, and world interaction in the formation of perceptions, but the second wave turned specifically to embodied and embedded experience. Merleau–Ponty's, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 1945, is a widely read work in the field of second wave phenomenology, it was one of the few studies that reiterated the significance of the body over the mind. Gallagher's *How the Body Shapes the Mind* is another important contribution in phenomenological studies. Following Ponty's thesis of the significance of the body over the body, Gallagher has further refined, and distinguished the concepts that Ponty left undifferentiated, like the difference between the body image and body schema.

52 This concept was introduced by Louis Sass in his book *Madness and Modernism.* Hype-reflexivity denotes excessive self consciousness, as opposed to unreflectiveness, and spontaneity. In the context of Beckett's texts, hyper reflexivity stands for excessive awareness of movements, and gesture. Contrary to Sass's claim that hyperreflexity in Beckett yields failure of intended action, this study argues that Beckett's characters discard intentionality, and hyper–reflexively execute their movements with utmost awareness, and precision, to take agential control of their bodies.

throw light on the permeable boundaries between subject/object, percipi/percipere[53], self/other, abled/disabled, thus also extending the argument in the domain of disability studies. The intertwining of movement with disability studies is not only intended to facilitate a description of Beckett's treatment of disability, but also to argue for the select texts as offering counter narratives to the contemporary milieu of the "super-crip"[54] where "epistemic injustice"[55]and "heuristic gaps"[56] leave movement normative, singular, misunderstood and under-explored.

Beckett's preoccupation with movement is discursively ubiquitous across his writing and brings to the fore the material and performative aspect of the body; his shaking, walking, limping, staggering, falling and crawling characters manifest movement as an indispensable condition for survival and a temporary release from hopelessness. Coincidentally, the preoccupation with movement of various kinds in the literary works resonates with Beckett's own penchant for walking in his personal life. The pertinence of this observation could be instantiated from his biographer, Knowlson's description:

> During the day, he trudged for hours on end around the streets and parks. He walked briskly: partly,because he wanted to tire himself out so that he would sleep; partly because the regularity of the movement acted as a kind anaesthetic, easing his troubles. (204)[57]

The rhythmical regularity of movement serves to yield an anesthetic effect in Beckett's life and also bears influence on his literary works. It is less that movement is necessarily cathartic, something that purifies or purges the body and mind, but more that walking seems to be a means, in the life and the writing, to benumb the senses and bodily sensations. It is a way of systemically fatiguing body and mind to the point of exhaustion, eradicating even the sensation of sensing the fatigue itself. Unlike

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53Percipi– is the condition of being perceived.

Percipere– the condition of perceiving.

Bishop Berkeley (1685-1753): Bishop of Cloyne and Fellow at Trinity College 1707-24: His *New Theory of Vision* appeared in 1709, and his greatest work, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, followed 1710. Berkeley's argument is summarized in the dictum *esse est percipi*, "to be is to be perceived," the keystone of his work. This asserts that objects of sense perception have no knowable existence outside the mind that perceived them. From this he reasoned that all reality ultimately exists in the mind of God.

Ackerley, Chris, and Gontarski, S. E. *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett : A Reader's Guide to His Works, Life, and Thought*. 1st ed. New York: Grove, 2004. Print.

54 Supercrip can be defined as a stereotype narrative displaying the plot of someone who has "to fight against his/her impairment" in order to overcome it, and achieve unlikely "success." When uncritically interpreted, this type of narrative can be regarded as positive, contesting dominant views regarding disability as "negative," and "inferior."

Silva, Carla Filomena, and P. David Howe, "The (in)Validity of Supercrip Representation of Paralympian Athletes," *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 36.2 (2012): 178

55Epistemic injustice corresponds to the patients' lack of opportunity to express themselves, and what they are going through. This denial makes them feel uninformed, and inadequate.

Carel, Havi. *Phenomenology of Illness*. First ed. 2016. Web.

56 This is another concept of Carel's which means the general absence of prevalent knowledge on the symptoms of a particular illness or biological condition. ibid.,90.

57 Knowlson, James. *Damned to Fame : The Life of Samuel Beckett*. London: Bloomsbury, 1996. Print.

medically induced anesthesia that benumbs the sensations and evokes a sleep-like state of minimal consciousness, enabling an absolute erasure of potentially tormenting sensations, the anesthetic ease that Beckett mentions is a state where pain, weariness, boredom, breathlessness, coupled with gradual transformations of speed and gait (intermittently syncopated by rest, and stops) are present not as an absence but paradoxically lived with fulsome consciousness.

Beckett replicates this extreme exhaustion of movement and its permutations in his works. He brings the body to the brink of exhaustion where gestures, postures, motion, space, memory, temporality, things, and consciousness are mined to their maximum potentialities, despite that there is neither stillness, nor stasis. For his characters are "never still," they exploit the possibilities of movement which their specific physicality affords them. While most Beckett scholars and critics have studied this physicality of movement with its apparent scarcity and repetition from a perspective of discourse analysis, revealing how the failure of language is metonymically aligned with the failure of movement ("logo-motion"[58]), a wide lacuna has been left for a more inclusive analysis of movement in Beckett's work across different novels. This chapter seeks to explore how Beckett's employment of movement acts as a vehicle showcasing persistence: it foregrounds the significant thematics of "fight, fight, fight" (Knowlson 170). The present study argues that while language fails his protagonists, it is movement that sustains the plot even in the sheer absence of coherent narrative progression.

The proceeding section focuses on Beckett's novels beginning with *Murphy* and, proceeding to *Watt*, *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, it draws a chronological account of the emergence of the language of movement as a powerful performative rhetoric that questions, reveals and exaggerates key established assumptions concerning will and intentionality, bodily ownership, agentiality, body-mind dichotomy, space/destination dialectics, and minimalism. This section investigates how Beckett encapsulates movement in his longer fiction; key questions will include: is movement an isolated endeavour circumscribed to oneself and culminating in oneself? How does it enable the confluence of several divergent faculties? Is movement normative and evolutionarily hard-wired, or is it an ever-evolving creative manifestation of the body? And finally, what is the role of space in relation to movement?– with an exploration of the shrinking spaces evident in the course of Beckett's fiction writing from *Murphy* to *The Unnamable*[59].

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58 As Bernini writes in his article, "Beckett's characters are often completely (*Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable*, *Texts for Nothing*) or progressively (*Molloy*) reduced to a degree of immobility that parallels the impoverishment of their narrative control and understanding in a mutual deterioration that [he] would synthesise as impeded logomotion" (45).
Bernini, Marco. "Crawling Creating Creatures: On Beckett's Liminal Minds." *European Journal of English Studies* 19.1 (2015): 39-54. Web.

59 *Murphy* is set in London while *The Unnameable* is set in a jar.

Murphy: The Inception of Hyper-reflexive Nomadism

> The rock got faster and faster, shorter and shorter, the iridescence was gone, the cry in the mew was gone, soon his body would be quiet. Most things under the moon got slower and slower and then stopped, a rock got faster and faster and then stopped. Soon his body would be quiet, soon he would be free. (8)[60]

Murphy provides a satirical account of the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy where the eponymous hero relentlessly tries to break free from his materiality and vanish into the realm of mind conceived in Cartesian terms of substance dualism as a place or space. The novel features a prominent object of pleasure which is the rocking chair. It is a receptacle for Murphy's body to achieve a state of semi-stasis so that his mind can freely ruminate and wonder, while his body rocks and oscillates inducing pleasurable stirrings. These shakings and stirrings of the rocking chair bring to the surface the quintessential Beckettian poetics of aporia – 'that is not moving, that's moving' (Sheehan 25)[61]; their representation gestures towards the idea of an overbearing "seed of motion" that survives even in the visible stillness of the body. *Murphy* showcases the beginning of Beckett's expansive, even excessive, engagement with the perception, reception and conception of motion occurring in an overwhelming diversity of bodily modifications.

Beckett explores multifarious implications of the idea of the "seed of motion" (Knowlson 247)[62]. The most compelling is that which derives from Murphy's forced Cartesianism and produces an exaggerated awareness of postures, gestures and comportment. The illustration of motion with microscopic precision shows the emergence of a preoccupation with hyper reflexivity in his early fiction. Hyper-reflexivity denotes excessive self-consciousness and awareness as opposed to pre-reflectivity, attunement, and spontaneity. Phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty, Zahavi, and Gallagher[63], have extensively discussed the pre-reflective attunement of the individual with regard to

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60 Beckett, Samuel. *Murphy*. London: Faber and Faber, 2009. Print.

61 Sheehan, Paul. "No Direction Home: Molloy, Travelogue, and Nomadic Modernism." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 26.1 (2017): 24-38. Web.

62 Ibid,.

63 Gal Zahavi, Dan., et al. *The Structure and Development of Self-Consciousness: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*: John Benjamins Pub, 2004. Print.

Gallagher, Shaun. *The Phenomenological Mind*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2012. Print.

" " . *How the Body Shapes the Mind*: Oxford University Press, 2005. Print.

his/her surroundings and embodiment. Merleau Ponty in his seminal work *Phenomenology of Perception* reinstates the body as the central subject in our percepetual interaction with the world, thereby, refuting prior understanding that the body is a mute vehicle of the mind and world interface. According to him, our perceptual underpinnings are rooted foundationally in bodily materiality and preconscious subjectivity. He calls this 'the primacy of perception, [thus] foregrounding the importance of pre-reflective experience to our encounter in the world' (Maude 4)[64]. This pre-reflective experience is composed of attunement, memory, learning, and all those ontological givens that our body is recipient and ever adaptive to even whilst the conscious mind is oblivious to them. Hyper-reflexivity is the reverse of the pre-reflective dimension. Perez defines it as 'intensified self-consciousness in which subjects disengage from normal forms of involvement with nature and society, often considering themselves as objects of focal awareness' (183)[65]. Sass too understands hyper-reflexivity in the context of Beckett as pathological, claiming that it yields to a failure of intended action of the characters. Contrary to Sass, this study argues that Beckett's characters show detachment between body and mind, here pre-reflectivity and intentionality are both foregrounded and complicated. In that, Beckettian characters hyper-reflexively execute their movements with utmost awareness and precision, in order to take agential control over their bodies.

Unlike the common understanding that hyper-reflexivity is restricted to the subject who undertakes an action here Beckett depicts how the onlooker is equally invested in perceiving a set of gestures. The key thing is that in Beckett's writing, hyper-reflexivity results in an obtruding of bodily movement because it is raised to the plane of the reflective rather than the taken for granted pre-reflective, so that the body, rather than being the place of embodied consciousness as subjectivity, is reified as a separately experienced object. This is evident when Murphy is in conversation with his mentor Neary and almost anticipates him in performing a certain set of gestures:

> The knuckles stood out white under the skin the usual way – that was the position. The hands then opened quite correctly to the utmost limit of their compass – that was the negation. It now seemed to Murphy that there were two equally legitimate ways in which gesture might be concluded…The hands might be clapped to the head in a smart gesture of despair, or let fall limply to the seams of the

64 Maude, Ulrika. *Beckett, Technology and the Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

65 Pérez-Álvarez, M. "Hyperreflexivity as a Condition of Mental Disorder: A Clinical and Historical Perspective". *Psicothema*. Vol. 20, 2008: 181–187.

> trousers…Judge then of his annoyance when Neary clenched them again more violently than before and dashed them against his breast bone. (5)

Murphy's defeated expectations project onto the plane of conscious awareness the affective response – normally pre-reflective – ordinarily evoked at witnessing movement. However, the collective involvement facilitated by movement is not confined to visually perceiving it, here the acoustic perception of motion is equally crucial. Celia's gentle oscillations on the rocking chair are contrasted with the upstairs lodger, an old butler's restive, restless and perpetual pacing in every direction of his tiny room. The to and fro swaying of both of these bodies: one in a state of calm, the other in the non-stillness of exasperation, creates a strangely syncopated harmony for Celia to the extent that the ceaseless footfalls become part of her life. That is, until they are halted by the old butler's suicide:

> Celia was in a state indeed, trembling and ashen. The footsteps overheard had become part and parcel of her afternoon, with the rocking chair and the vermigrade wane of light. An Aegean nightfall suddenly in Brewery Road could not have upset her more than this failure of the steps. (85)

Celia's panic at the abrupt cessation of the motion, without having either seen or performed it, culminates in her moving to the room of the deceased with her rocking chair where she pleasurably sways in 'a soft swaggering to and fro' (141) thus reproducing Beckett's idea of 'motion both ceaseless and endless' (Ackerley 116)[66], but neither entirely obligatory, nor just doomed to failure. Contrary to the dominant conception, this movement is not a futile attempt to renounce materiality or a defeated stint to gain freedom. Rather it offers pleasurable exhaustion and exemption from the passive motionless waiting. Most importantly, it enables a creative evolution in the face of the destitution of language, space, memory and purpose. This is evident from Murphy's experiences at the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat (MMM), where he is almost animated, by an apneic[67] inmate, Mr Endon's, movements:

> For quite sometime Mr. Endon had been drifting in the corridors, pressing here a switch and there an indicator, in a way that seemed haphazard but was in fact determined by an amental pattern…ringing the changes on the various ways in

66 Ackerley, Chris. "Samuel Beckett and the Physical Continuum." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 25.1 (2016): 110-31. Web.

67 Obstructive Sleep Apnoea, is a disorder characterizing temporary lapse in breathing while asleep.

> which the indicator could be pressed and the light turned on and off. Beginning with the light turned off to begin with he had: lit, indicated, extinguished; lit, extinguished, indicated; indicated lit extinguished; continuing then with the light turned on to begin with he had: extinguished, indicated lit; indicated, extinguished, and was seriously thinking of lighting when murphy stayed his hand. (75)

The absurd and redundant inventory of Mr. Endon's motion projects an idea of repetition that is replete with permutations and possibilities. Mr Endon's apnoea, his deliberate and meticulous fiddling with the indicator, is yet an act imbued with creativity and hope. The hyper reflexive "unworlding"[68] wrought by mental disorders combined with the loss of purpose does not here, however, herald a complete dissolution of self into the world. Sass attributes to this kind of "psychomathematics" as a dissolution of the vital mental processes, 'it seems that [in] the reflexive move, [in] the turning inwards,…we find, tightly intertwined, a solipsism that would elevate the mind and derealise the world and a self-objectification that would rob the subject of its transcendental role as a center of power and knowledge…What we are discovering…are the characteristic paradoxes of the reflexive contradictions generated by the alienation and hyper-self-consciousness that are central both to schizophrenia' (338)[69]. The alienation and hyper consciousness that to Sass appears as degenerative heralds an entirely different way of perceiving, and organizing the world and mental capacities[70]. It invokes a parallel form of creativity that enables the reconstitution of a new world order where possibilities perpetually evolve and are exhausted even in the decimation of the previously existing sense of reason and order. The experience of hyper-reflexive un-worlding is not just an occurrence configuring disorientation but may also be understood as potentially a redemptive un-worlding from perfunctory habits, mundane attunement giving way to a creative form of exhaustion where 'the exhauster must be exhausting the possible for no other reason than itself, while at the same time the exhauster must be doing so as an intentionally creative act' (Ackerley 139)[71]. The loss of a preexisting structure of the world in many of Beckett's texts marks a dissolution of habit and attunement, one that does not so much signify a

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68 According to Heidegger, ' Unworlding of the human world" occurs when, "external reality looses not its substantiality and otherness but its human resonance or significance' (Sass 33), signifying a world where, 'all around us defying our pack of animistic or domesticating adjectives things are … without false glamour , without transparency' (ibid 33).
Sass, Louis A. *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought*. New York, NY: Basic, 1992. Print.

69 Ibid,.

70 An analogy that instantiates this is the assertion of Sass's own subject Lawrence, who found psychomathematics as having "substance, it was real". He goes on to say 'this intuitive science of the mind required no research whatsoever' and had no purpose beyond its own, self generated coming into being: 'I applied it as soon as I discovered it; the discovery was the application' (ibid, 335).

71 Ibid,.

pathological collapse but, as Carel says in regard to illness, instead yields 'freedom, and imagination [that] can enable even those who are unable to be in one way to be in a new way' (84)[72].

The impulse to sustain one's self even in an apparent minimality of choice is explored throughout *Murphy* through the recurring motif of a journey across a vast topography. Murphy's "stravague"[73] across London in search of a job is a directionless perambulation from one destination to another which, in the preliminary phase, ends with a regression back to his own lodging. Gradually, the significance of a fixed destination is curtailed through the deployment of a textual nomadism, which for Murphy was 'much more pleasant,…[a] sensation of being a missile without provenance or target, caught up in a tumult of non-Newtonian motion. So pleasant that pleasant was not the word' (72). The reveries afforded to Murphy by his non-directional movement are preceded by long hours of walking on undulating terrain that reaps fatigue, and stiffness in the legs:

> He leaned weakly against the railings of the Royal Free Hospital…if only he were immediately wafted to his rocking chair and allowed to rock for five minutes. To sit down was no longer enough, he must insist now on lying down. Any old clod of the well known English turf would do on which he might lie down, cease to take notice and enter the landscapes of where there was no chandlers and no exclusive residential cancers but only himself improved out of all knowledge. (51)

Murphy's strolls are not without extreme physical exertion but his frequent reference to the discomfort of pleasurableness highlights that exhaustion in movement is a welcome supplement. Even if the protagonist adheres to the strictures of Cartesianism, for him it is the pleasure of the body that supersedes that of the mind. It is the active and wearisome body that facilitates the much-avowed freedom to ruminate 'thus as the body set him free more and more in his mind…and more and more and more in the dark, in the will-lessness, a mote in its absolute freedom' (72). The will-lessness that Murphy craves is the freedom from worldly obligations; a redemption from normative ideals of direction, destination, purpose, body, language and speech. Murphy, despite being a strict Cartesian, is ironically also the seeker of asylum. In pursuing freedom of the mind, he desires to suspend his reason and rationality– precisely the celebrated assets of the Cartesian mind. His yearning to be un-

72 Ibid,.

73 As his biographer Knowlson notes, this was Beckett's preferred word for walking (634). It means straying or roaming.

worlded from his compulsion to be does not, however, make him an indolent/ "omnidolent", or a lazy character, but someone who wants to escape the tedium of habit. As Beckett asserts in his famous article on Proust:

> Habit is a compromise effected between the individual and his environment, or between the individual and his own organic eccentricities, the guarantee of a dull inviolability … Habit is the ballast that chains the dog to it vomit. (Turbridy 45)[74]

In this regard, Murphy too is a Beckettian character who wants to unfetter himself from attunement and live fully in his eccentricities. The standard view of the quintessential Beckettian character/ creature is that he or she seeks to escape into a world of absolute freedom, where the mind conquers, followed by a complete annihilation of the body. But Beckett does not allow Murphy to attain any such absolute dissolution of materiality or existence. Even after his body is charred, his ashy remains disperse across the floor, comingling with 'the sand, the beer, the butt, the glass, the matches, the spits, the vomit' (177). These are either fluids and secretions of the body, or constituents of body-centric indulgences. Hence, even in what might seem the final, still, ashen state, his body refuses to dissolve itself away into nothingness, but rather comingles with the secretions and onward flowingness of other bodies.

In Beckettian poetics, redemption from habit and regress into the zone of nothingness signals creative fruition, but not an escape into death through suicide. According to him, "un-worlding" takes its shape in discarding the pre-reflective by indefatigably exhausting the potentialities of the liminal. This is evidently portrayed by other characters in the novel whose persistence is juxtaposed with Murphy's reluctance to go on. These characters are inevitably positioned on the fringes of existence. They are vulnerable entities who could aptly be considered to be inverted versions of the idea of socially acceptable humans: Celia, Mr. Kelly, Cooper, Mr. Endon are more at a social, mental, and physical disadvantage than Murphy in being enabled to lead a life of free will and authoritative agency, in that they are, both literally and metaphorically, un-worlded. Nonetheless, there is a poignant ethical resonance to their depicted individuality. Unlike Murphy, an able-bodied man, who willingly gathers himself into his rocking chair ready to re-embrace the cherished state of torpor, these enfeebled characters keep trudging on. The climax of the novel showcases the disparity between the chosen fate

74 Tubridy, Derval. "Samuel Beckett and Performance Art." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 23.1 (2014): 34-53. Web.

of the protagonist, and the tenacity of the aforementioned characters, each surviving and continuing to move in his/her particular condition of vulnerability. This is discernible when Cooper, a staggering character who walks with the aid of crutches, who has not sat down for years, finally manages to achieve his desire towards the end of the novel. Beckett's meticulous account of Cooper's formulation and realisation of this fixed aim – this trying to seat himself – opens up portals for engaging with physical limitations not as a stagnating end of possibilities, but instead enriched with myriad permutations and where exaggerated contemplation in undertaking a certain posture, finally ends in accomplishing it:

> Cooper did not know what happened to set him free of those feelings that for so many years had forbidden him to take a seat…nor did he pause to inquire. He placed his ancient bowler crown upward on the step, squatted high above it, took careful aim through the crutch, closed his eye, set his teeth, flung his feet forward into space and came down on his buttocks with the force of a pile ram. No second blow was required. (170)

In being hyperbolically aware of the body with its extant capacities, Cooper not only portrays the notion of the minimal encompassing the infinite, but also depicts how he is emphatically neither a bored, nor an indolent character. He even shuns contemplation of what has impeded him from sitting and, in so doing, forsakes the pre-reflective and phenomenological. His movement delineates a glimpse of what Deleuze refers to as 'an infinite learning, which is of a different nature to knowledge' (251)[75]; it is an approach to learning that discards any preexisting stock of knowledge, any existing rules of composition. A learning that reveals the heuristic gaps that lie in misrecognising the kinetic potentialities of each body even in the wake of its ostensible limitations.

The novel then also proposes an empathetic and ethical reading of disability by proposing an end to the imposition of normalcy on human beings in their modes of posture, gait and ideas of mental wellbeing. The kite-flying scene in the novel is wrought with connotations of emotional, empathetic and ethical profundity. Mr. Kelly, a paraplegic, takes immense delight in kite flying, despite being paralysed below the torso. He shows tremendous adeptness in moving his arms to propel the kite skyward:

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75 Deleuze, Gilles, and Patton, Paul. *Difference and Repetition*: Bloomsbury Revelations, 2014. Print.

> Mr. Kelly's hands felt the wind he wanted, the glove fell, Celia, threw up the kite. And so great was his skill that in five minutes he was lying back, breathing hard and short, his eyes closed of necessity but in ecstasy as it happened. (173)

The ecstatic closing of Mr. Kelly's eyes eventually makes him fall asleep on his wheelchair, which ends in a tragic fall: 'Mr Kelly tottered to his feet, tossed up his arms high and wide and quavered away down the path that led to the water, a ghastly lamentable figure' (174). The scene ends with Celia taking him into her arms and dragging him on the wheelchair, up the hill; knowing, 'there was no shorter way home,' (75) she still continues onwards to tread. The novel ends with the exclamation "all out" which articulates the poignancy of the situation, Ackerley interprets it as a composite 'image of total ("all out") exhaustion' (215)[76]. The kind of exhaustion that however 'elegiac [is] yet free of sentimentality' (215) and closure, as both Celia and Mr. Kelly still continue their long tread towards home.

The relationship between Celia and Mr. Kelly, two flimsy figures, shows mutual dependence and the universal human condition of shared vulnerabilities. The grim spectacle of the latter's fall brings to the fore the pervasive susceptibility to falling of the human body which, for Beckett, finds no release or liberation in suicide or escape. In the Beckettian form of un-worlding, when the individual comes to terms with his/her vulnerabilities, and limitations, these do not foreclose all chance of the individual gaining control and agency: rather such vulnerabilities provide an opportunity for achieving a consciousness that encompasses excessive attention and meticulous precision. These minimalities are infinitely and creatively exhausting. They have an unceasing chain of trial and error, falling and getting up, doing and repeating and never giving up. Thus, movement for Beckett is more than just a vehicle for signifying overwhelming failure and loss: it is an excessive engagement with space experienced through the body, with the aid of kinetic potentialities of the body that are mostly left unexplored, unexperienced and unavailable. *Murphy* inaugurates Beckett's more experimental and evolving depiction of motion and journey. This work marks the emergence of the Beckettian dialectics of nomadism signifying "all centre, no circumference" (40). This "centre" that Beckett explores in his later fiction is what Marco Bernini attributes to "infinite regress," which stands for the dissolution of

76 Ackerley, Chris. *Demented Particulars : The Annotated Murphy*. 2nd Ed. Revised. ed. Tallahassee, Fla.*: Journal of Beckett Studies*, 2004. Print.

the higher levels of cognition into a state of wormlike primordial self – a "protoself"[77]. The idea of "infinite regress" can be instantiated in gradual transition from 'there is no shorter way home' to the absolute obliteration of home in his more mature works. Beckett, in his letter to Nuala Costello, describes this phenomenon as '[the] delicious conception of movement as gress, pure and mere gress,' (186)[78], it is something that constitutes 'purity from destination and hence from schedule'[79]. This kind of (re)gression is brought about by the initiation into a world of concentrated and deliberative motion which opens up the exploration of embodied consciousness; the kinetic abilities of the human; the implications of being the percipi and percipere; and the intertwining of language with movement.

Watt: Journey without Direction and Destination

'It is by the nadir we come, said Watt, and it is by the nadir that we go, whatever that means' (111)[80]

The subsequent section of the present study concentrates upon Beckett's novel *Watt*, published in 1953, two years after *Murphy*. Like the previous novel, *Watt* too, chronicles the story of its eponymous hero Watt. The title of the novel suggests the homophonic implications of two disparate terms watt and what. The former denotes the measuring unit of electricity and power. It thereby also stands for speed, alacrity, brightness, precision and calibration. In stark contrast to this, is the question what, which complicates the previous categories by projecting ambiguity, confusion lack of meaning and signification. The oxymoronic connotations of the title are not accidental in the novel because Beckett judiciously explores or rather parodies this opposition in the protagonist's personae, who is neither bright, nor sharp, nor fast as his name suggests. In so doing, Beckett puts forth the fluidity between calibration and confusion, clarity and ambivalence, precision and vagueness[81]. The current section aims to demonstrate how the physical movement of the characters in the novel demonstrates the aforementioned poetics of vagueness; and how does embodied movement also propel narrative movement.

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77 According to Damasio, the worm could be explained as such, "Worm, to say he does not know what he is, where he is, what is happening, is to underestimate him. What he does not know is that there is anything to know. His senses tell him nothing, nothing about himself, nothing about the rest, and this distinction is beyond him. Feeling nothing, knowing nothing, he exists nevertheless." Bernini, Marco. "GRESSION, REGRESSION, AND BEYOND: A Cognitive Reading of." *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* 26.1 (2014): 193-209. Web.

78 Beckett, Samuel, et al. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Print.

79 Ibid,.

80 Beckett, Samuel. *Watt*: Faber and Faber, 2009. Print.

81 'The obvious, said Beckett, is always right: a basic morpheme articulates an elementary question: "What"; to meet an impassible, inevitable answer: "[K]not." Out of such fundamental sounds Watt's frustrated quest to understand the mystery of his master, a center seeking its circle, assumes its ineluctable shape' (28).
Ackerley, Chris, and Beckett, Samuel. *Obscure Locks, Simple Keys: The Annotated 'Watt'*. Edinburgh UP, 2010. Web.

Watt was written during a period of extreme duress in Beckett's life, one which might aptly be described as a form of unofficial incarceration. Following Beckett's involvement with the French Resistance during the Nazi occupation of France and the consequent discovery of his abode in Paris, both Beckett and Suzanne had eloped to the village of Rousillon, finding a refuge there between 1943 to 1945. Beckett had taken shelter with others and occupied an unheated large room located in the upper story of the house. Here, he fell into the grip of an intense ennui and boredom, 'as he waited for nothing to happen' (Knowlson 333)[82]. In order to escape the stasis of intellectual and physical exertion, he took up an unpaid job as a farm labour in the morning, penning *Watt* in the evenings. As his biographer Knowlson suggests, 'however much the physical labour in the fields occupied Beckett, and anaesthetised his body … it scarcely began to satisfy the needs of his mind. In the evening therefore, he took up again the novel *Watt*' (333)[83]. The trajectory of tedium, nothingness, and smallness and vastness of spaces that structure the text can be seen to reiterate and explicate the experience of its author at the time of writing.

Developing the analysis of the association of anaesthesia with physical labour, this section shall explore the uniqueness of movement in *Watt* in conjunction with the categories of habit and permutation, speed and logomotion, success and failure, and hyper-reflexivity and intentionality. *Watt* opens with an introduction to Mr. Hackett, who is described as having a hunched back, and possessing "an agitated walk" (3). Mr. Hackett, given his infirmities, is hyper conscious of the surrounding space. His decisions concerning movement are steered after consciously analysing his spatial orientation, and deducing his respective kinetic abilities, constraints and possibilities:

> Space was open on his right, and on his left, but he knew he would never take advantage of this. He knew also that he would not long remain motionless, for the state of his health rendered this unfortunately impossible. The dilemma was thus of extreme simplicity…Was he to go home at once, or was he to remain out a little longer. (3)

Mr Hackett has a stick which not only aids in walking, but also at times works as his fingers, providing him with appeasing sensations through its rubber ends. His relationship to the stick surpasses its functional utilisation; additionally, since his stick is also an object that performs the role of a hand in

82 Ibid,.

83 Knowlson, James. *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett.* London: Bloomsbury, 1996. Print.

a hand, – 'stretching out his hand, he fastened it round the rail. This permitted him to strike his stick against the pavement. The feel in his palm, of the thudding rubber appeased him, slightly' (3). These expositions on Mr Hackett's comportment and postures assume further poignancy when he is looked at by an acquaintance, a couple who label him, the "hunchy Hackett" (5). The couple greet Mr Hackett with a more pronounced act of ceremonious kindness:

> I have heard so much about you, said the lady, now I meet you, at last. Mr Hackett!
> I do not rise, not having the force, said Mr Hackett.
> Why I should think not indeed, said the lady. She stooped towards him, quivering with solicitude. I should hope not indeed, she said. (5)

Beckett here parodies the ostentatious sympathy in the treatment of the disabled by society. The pitiful gazes darted at Mr Hackett project the imposing and presumptuous attitudes of the typical able-bodied individuals towards those with visible infirmities. But Mr Hackett is aware of his kinaesthetic limitations along with being cognizant of the needs of his specific embodiment. He possesses a hyper-reflexive command over his body which enables him to navigate through the spaces around him with the creative deployment of his full kinetic potential. Hence Beckett proposes an alternative ethical stance to the usual vaguely assumed projection of empathy onto those perceived as "disabled", by insisting that imposing such an homogenising, normative perspective on different body types effaces one's freedom to be; it inevitably positions the "enfeebled" body in the zone of the pitied, objectified, judged, shamed, and bullied. A further glimpse of this consequence is facilitated in the delineation of the newsagent whose movements seem to happen in "aborted genuflexions". He is described as a man who appeared to possess 'more than usual acerbity, and to suffer from unremitting mental, moral, and perhaps physical pain' (19). These incriminating pronouncements on the disabled are akin to the perception of physical limitations as being the bane of existence such that life is made unrelentingly miserable. Additionally, the preposterous implication that the newsagent is most assuredly in moral and mental pain, while plagued by a physical one highlights the ways in which normative culture attributes to disabled people a lack of emotional tenderness, thus brutalising and reducing them as full human beings. The tendency to perceive their frailties as divine punishment for their moral laxity not surprisingly follows.

The commonplace practise of judging/perceiving the disabled through the rigid lens of the normative is further expounded when Watt, the protagonist, has to endure an even worse fate. Readers become

familiar with Watt through repeated elaborate descriptions of his peculiar funambulistic[84] walk, which Beckett portrays deploying a third person perspective that reinstates Watt as a percipi who is not just being unwittingly perceived, but microscopically observed as if he were a creature under the lens of a scientific gaze:

> Standing first on one leg, and then on the other, he moved forward, a headlong tardigrade, in a straight line. The knees, on these occasions, did not bend. No knees could better bend than Watt's…but when out walking they did not bend, for some obscure reason. Notwithstanding this, the feet fell, the heel and sole together, flat upon the ground, and left it, for the air's uncharted ways…The arms were content to dangle, in perfect equipendency. (24)

Watt's peculiar funambulistic gait is an inversion of the normative rule/ideal of walking. Watt discards the dogmatic indispensability of bending the knees while walking; perhaps he chooses not to bend them and instead resorts to a rigid strut, which even though strange to the sight, has an uninterrupted regularity of its own. According to Kenner, this apparent desynchronization of movement reflects 'a congeries of gestures owing no intelligible relationship, united apparently by happenstance' (87)[85]. What Kenner calls "happenstance" and "unintelligible" is a result of extreme precision and hyper-reflexivity. Notwithstanding his inflexible knees, Watt achieves "perfect equipendency"[86] or balance not only by increasing his sense of proprioceptive awareness but also by adopting slowness or tardiness ("tardigrade")[87]. This is not only an abrogation of speediness but also a studied manipulation of intentionality and pre-reflectivity; here the intention is to proceed but not unthinkingly, rather contemplatively.

Although the reason behind the voluntary or involuntary inflexibility of the knees remains a mystery, it however evokes wonderment and curiosity in the narrator and beholders within the story-world of the text. This is most perceptible when Watt is gazed on, judged, chased and finally attacked by Lady McCann, who, 'coming from behind thought she had never on the public road, seen motions so extraordinary, and few women had a more extensive experience of the public road than lady McCann.

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84 That of a tightrope walker, the French funambulesque having more of the sense "eccentric" or "outlandish" (52). Ackerley, Chris, and Beckett, Samuel. *Obscure Locks, Simple Keys: The Annotated 'Watt'*. Edinburgh UP, 2010. Web.

85 Kenner, Hugh. *Samuel Beckett : A Critical Study*. London: J. Calder, 1962. Print.

86 "Culled from Johnson's Dictionary , where "equipendency" is defined as 'The act of hanging in equipoise' (Ackerley 52)

87 Tardigrade: "slowmoving," as tardigradous in *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary*. The pattern is sigmoidal, as that of a reptile, fish, or amphibian; or an arthopod of the class Tardigrade. (Ackerley, 51)

That they were not due to alcohol appeared from their regularity, and dogged air. Watt's was a funambulistic stagger' (24). The curious spectacle that Watt provides to his uninvited spectators/ observers is however, an example of a common experience in encountering a sight or an object that complicates the cultural binaries between the normal and the anomalous. Kristeva refers to this as a condition of abjection, 'for it is not the lack of cleanliness, or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, and order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules, the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' (4) [88]. Since funambulism signifies two radically contrasting ideas of spectatorship: on a rope it signifies graceful manipulation of the body, but on a public road it becomes a stagger and consequently a matter of speculation, disdain, abjection and violence.

Beckett makes these subtle ethical provocations so as to introduce a defamiliarization of its processes so that the normative ethics that understands and proposes to condone the practice of pathologising, stigmatising, and tagging to those who obliterate the epistemic understanding of physical normalcy is revealed as a purely cultural construct. Beckett's writing thereby prompts the reader, in struggling to assimilate and make meaningful the representation of funambulism, to question his or her own tendencies to condone or buy into the insidious narrative of normalcy that makes a flaw of any perceptible limitation as understood through the frame of such normalcy. In its place, Beckett deploys the poetics of repetition and minimalism, which resonate with the possibility of creative alternatives and persistence in the face of hardships, misunderstanding and failure. Watt demonstrates persistence when he continues to stride on even after being attacked by Lady McCann with a stone:

> After one or two false starts, again in motion, Watt, faithful to his rule, took no notice of this aggression than if it had been an accident…For it was an attitude become, with frequent repetition, so part of his being, that there was no room in his mind for resentment. (25)

This passage is again imbued with ethical and cultural undertones, associated with the form of movement and which Beckett channels affectively through the medium of stoic humour. Anathematic to the critical claims that Beckett's characters seek redemption from embodiment, these incidents propose that it is precisely through movement that they reclaim embodiment and exploit their inexorable will to move on, despite the looming threat of failure. Concomitantly, they delineate themes

88 Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*: Columbia University Press, 1982. Print.

of resilience, persistence and agency in their steering of potentially adverse and adversarial forces. They may possess a hunched back, a dreadful limp, or a funambulistic gait, yet they trudge on, each in his own specific way, not necessarily because they are compelled by obligation but because they remain defiantly unaffected by the judgements inflicted upon them. Despite being frail and vulnerable, these characters encompass tenacity. By imbibing these contradictory, yet complementary traits they give life and meaning to the epigram of the chapter, 'all before. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better' (Knowlson 674)[89].

This articulation of disability and impairment in *Watt* suggests the adoption of what Ratcliffe calls 'bracketing of the natural attitude, [which] is a withdrawal from the ordinarily implicit commitment to the reality of the world' (4) [90]. This approach advocates for a suspension of our judgments, and preordained expectations towards disease, illness and physical or mental debilities. Beckett's technique of defamiliarisation is based on Husserl's phenomenological epoché, which is the suspension of 'a certain dogmatic attitude towards reality, thereby allowing us to focus more narrowly and directly on reality just as it is given…The only thing that is excluded as a result of the epoche is a certain naivety, the naivety of simply taking the world for granted' (22)[91].The revocation of the exclusive concept of normalcy can be seen as a step towards paving the way for a kind of inclusivity which would simply accept or encourage that each body should express itself according to its own agential possibilities without being labelled as an aberration. *Watt* is an exploration of this unrestricted creative expression of a diversity of bodies, none of which adhere to the received modes of what is regarded as normalcy.

Through the extensive exploration of movement, Beckett incorporates an inexhaustible poetics of motion that supplants the absence of a linear plot, traditional characterisation and comprehensible syntax. The depiction of motion in its most minute details, accompanied by an acute awareness of the tiniest and vastest of spaces, heralds a kind of textual hyper-reflexive consciousness of the body in motion. It gestures to a "larval consciousness" which is a prenatal and pre-objective form of consciousness, Deleuze refers to it as the fractured sense of "I" an "aborted cogito" that restricts the formation of habit and memory, rather it relies on a pattern of pure repetition that is founded upon forgetting, displacement and "difference-in-itself". According to Deleuze the primordial origin of

89 Ibid,.

90 Maude, Ulrika., and Feldman, Matthew. *Beckett and Phenomenology*. London: Continuum International, 2009. Print.

91 Gallagher, Shaun, and Zahavi, Dan. *The Phenomenological Mind*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2012. Web.

pure repetition lies in pure difference ("difference-in-itself") which takes various displaced forms. This kind of repetition is exhaustive, in that, it repeats itself but is always disparate[92].

Watt demonstrates how Deleuzian repetition, which perpetually renews itself, thereby resists memory building and habit formation. In the novel, we see that Watt is exaggeratedly alert to the spaces he traverses, since his kinetic skills are forever in a state of readiness and flux. He feels different each time he mounts the stairs of Mr. Knott's establishment. The same flight of stairs renews its appearance to him:

> The stairs that never seemed the same stairs, from one night to another, and now very steep, and now shallow, and now long, and now short, and now broad, and now narrow, and now dangerous, and now safe, and that he climbed among the moving shadows, every night. (97)

Deciphering Watt's impression of the stairs simply as absurdist, or simply a pessimistic avowal of nothingness is to deny the infinite novelty of the repetition in the novel. Watt's commute on the staircase reflects a reciprocal relationship of corporeality with immediate spaces, where the realisation of kinesthetic abilities relies heavily on the demands of the terrain which one traverses. Refuting the phenomenological stipulation of pre-reflective awareness,[93] Beckett portrays Watt's advances across the same terrain by replacing the pre-reflective with the regressively primordial stage of renegotiation of the body with the habituated spaces. In that, the formation of habitual attunement is constantly denied to Watt. In line with Husserl's epoché, Watt remains a consciousness that is devoid of taken for granted assumptions and pre-reflectivity. Contra to this, Watt's embodiment and consciousness are primordial, non-passive and non-habitual. Thus, his experience with the same staircase is replete with novelty and surprise.

This regression is apropos of a "larval consciousness"[94] that does not settle in the cocoon of habit but finds a becoming where each experience assumes a creative singularity, without settling in the wider corpus of memory and attunement as the rhythmical accommodation to habit. Ulrike Maude,

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92 Ibid,.

93 Dan Zahavi and, and Shaun Gallagher describe the preflective as "pre-reflective self-consciousness is pre-reflective in the sense that (1) it is an awareness we have before we do any reflecting on our experience; (2) it is an implicit and first-order awareness rather than an explicit or higher-order form of self-consciousness". Gallagher, Shaun and Zahavi, Dan, "Phenomenological Approaches to Self-Consciousness", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/self-consciousness-phenomenological/ . Accessed on May 2019.

94 Larval consciousness is the primordial, prenatal, and pre-objective consciousness. Gilles Deleuze elaborately describes it in the work, *Difference and Repetition.* Deleuze, Gilles, and Patton, Paul. *Difference and Repetition.* Bloomsbury Revelations, 2014. Print..

in her essay on 'Beckett and the Laws of Habit' suggests two ways of understanding habit: one that is simply a mechanical non-conscious repetition, these are things done unthinkingly and repeatedly; the second way is to look at habit as a willing construction of one's life, something that 'is not merely a question of mechanical repetition, but rather involves the will and originates in an intentional act' (813)[95]. Taking Revaissson's thesis, Maude attributes to habit both "permanence and change," which configure as 'the first conditions of habit'. Observing habit under the lens of intentionality and will imparts it a creative becoming, this is a facet that is consistently present in *Watt*. Nonetheless, it does not assume the permanence of habit configuring a trajectory of life. This is because the characters perpetually obliterate both memory and forgetting, since in order to forget something one needs to memorise or remember it. In *Watt* however, the characters neither remember nor forget. On one side they actively register the nature of their surroundings while on the other they actively un-remember it. An illustration of this is Mr Knott's stroll in the same garden and his own house, which is akin to an exploratory excursion where he finds the setting renewed. His unfamiliarity with the mundane vicinity is not entirely a pathological symptom of lapses in memory but is also redolent of the quickening possibilities of existing with utter disregard to the clutches of habit and memory, the harbingers of boredom:

> When Mr Knott moved about the house he did so as one unfamiliar with the premises, fumbling at the doors immediately locked, kneeling rapt on window seats, stumbling in the door, seeking high, and low the water closet, pausing irresolute at the foot of the stairs, pausing irresolute at the head of the stairs. (176)

The endless pauses, undetermined steps chart a course of movement that is characteristic of neither progress nor regress, but rather it is a "gress"[96] where movement is always located at the centre, that is, each spot is the epicentre of motion without a fixed circumference and periphery. Here, Mr Knott is not a victim of forsaken memory and deteriorating physicality but is instead positioned at a preliminary stage of motion, where the pre-determined, non-conscious character of movement is transformed into a primordial hyper-reflexive one. Like Watt's, his too is a larval consciousness, incessantly marching towards eternal "immemoriality" as opposed to fragmentary forgetfulness.

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95 Maude, Ulrika. "Beckett and the Laws of Habit.(Samuel Beckett)." *Modernism/Modernity* 18.4 (2011): 813-821. Web.

96 Beckett, in his letter to Nuala Costello, describes gress as 'this delicious conception of movement as gress, pure and mere gress,' calling it "purity from destination and hence from schedule." Beckett, Samuel, et al. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*: Cambridge University Press, 2009.Print.

Probing Mr Knott's movement in the more familiar setting of his room, the narrator provides an inventory-like description of his circulation across all corners and angles of the room. At a cursory reading the account comes across as exaggeratedly absurd in its perfunctory repetition. But a closer perusal reveals that Mr Knott leaves no combination of mutation unexplored; or any possibilities of space unutilised:

> Here he stood. Here he sat. Here he knelt. Here he lay. Here he moved, to and fro, from the door to the window; from the window to the door;…from the fire to the bed; from the bed to the fire;…from the door to the fire; from the fire to the door; …from the window to the bed; from the bed to the window;…from the fire to the window; from the window to the fire;…from the bed to the door; from the door to the bed; from the window to the fire; from the fire to the window; from the window to the door; from the door to the bed; from the bed to the door; from the door to the window; from the fire to the bed, from the bed to the window. (176)

This cataloguing ends after exhausting all the probabilities of movement, elucidating Mr Knott's mode of inhabiting the minimal space of his room to the maximum of its capacities.

The scarcity of spaces, in conjugation with the repetition of motion and lack of memory is not an expression of nothingness that is devoid of possibilities, rather it is a nadir that is replete with constant potential for permutation; the utmost maximum of Beckett's "meremost minimum" (46).[97] Beckett extends this enumeration even with regard to the arrangement of furniture in Mr Knott's room that comprises five articles of portability, namely: the night-stand, dressing-table, wash hand-stand, tallboy, and the chairs all rearranged in myriad combinations with reference to their orientation in relation to the window, fire, door and bed. These shifting patterns of arrangements instantiate Beckett's 'linking [of] logical exhaustion to physiological exhaustion' (Dennis 10)[98]. It also shows that exhaustion releases one from boredom. These characters find renewal of possibilities in everyday minimalism because they never cease to experiment and recreate. Since Beckett divests them of purpose, goal, or a specific end, they never cease to be in the mode of becoming. The eternal flux of the moment towards no desired future or aims makes them indefatigably creative.

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97 Beckett, Samuel. *Worstward Ho*: John Calder, 1983. Print.

98 "Compulsive Bodies, Creative Bodies: Beckett's Quad and Agency in the 21 St Century." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 27.1 (2018): 5-21. Web.

This is pertinent in Watt's deployment of movement and language. His excessive engagement with language, its dynamic mode of the mimetic, is analogous with that of Mr Knott's optimum utilization of spaces and furniture. The narrator claims that Watt spoke, 'with scant regard for grammar, for syntax, for pronunciation, for enunciation, and very likely, if the truth were known, to spelling too, as these are generally perceived…the labour of composition the uncertainty as to how to proceed, or whether proceed at all or not…had here no part apparently' (133). The readers are acquainted with Watt's assiduously inverted articulations in simultaneity with his recently adopted backward strolls in the garden. Watt not only manipulates his walk by facing backwards while striding forwards, but also reverses the way he communicates. The narrator gives a fitting account of the peculiar developments that occurred in Watt's spoken language, each of which was a result of diligent investigations in Watt's mind. He took to inverting:

> The order of the letters in the word together with that of the sentences in the period, but that of the letters in the word together with that of the words in the sentence together with that of the sentences in the period.
> For example:
> *Dis yb dis, nem owt. Yad la, tin fo trap. Skin, skin, skin. Od su did ned taw? On. Taw ot klat tonk? On. Tonk ot klat taw? On. Tonk ta kool taw? Nilb, mun, mud. Tin fo trap, yad la. Nem owt, dis yb dis*. (143)

The nadir of Watt's speech is a deliberate annihilation of sense and meaning-making practices that are built into language acquisition. Controverting Maude's remarks that language in Beckett manifests a pathological loss of the word in the form of aphasia[99] and a loss of voluntary control over verbal articulations as is normally observed in the Tourette's[100], this reading suggests that the collapse of the signifier and signified relation are meticulous and voluntary inversions of Watt's to anesthetise language and to distance or remove it from any obligations towards habitual or conscious meaning-making. Watt, through varied combinations and reversals, deliberately de-sensitises language to

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99 National Aphasia Association describes it as 'aphasia is an impairment of language, affecting the production, or comprehension of speech, and the ability to read or write. Aphasia is always due to injury to the brain– most commonly after stroke, particularly in older individuals. But brain injuries resulting in aphasia may also arise from head trauma, from brain tumors, or from infections'. "Aphasia Definitions." *National Aphasia Association* https://www.aphasia.org/aphasia-definitions/

100 Oliver Sacks, enumerates Tourette's syndrome as, 'it is characterized, above all, by convulsive tics, by involuntary mimicry or repetition of others' words or actions (echolalia and echopraxia), and by the involuntary or compulsive utterances of curses and obscenities (coprolalia), … [and] a constant, restless reacting to the environment, a lunging at and sniffing of everything or a sudden flinging of objects' (73). Sacks, Oliver (1995), 'A Surgeon's Life', *An Anthropologist on Mars*, London: Picador, pp. 73–101. Print.

coherent meaning and uniform structure. In doing so, he "unworlds" the mechanisms of linguistic conventions, which brings to the fore Beckett's oft quoted affirmations on the use of language:

> It is to be hoped the time will come, when language is best used where it is most effectively abused. Since we cannot dismiss it all at once, at least we do not want to leave anything undone that may contribute to its disrepute. To drill one hole after another into it until that which lurks behind, be it something or nothing, starts seeping through – I cannot imagine a higher goal for today's writer. (518)[101]

The deliberate perforations in the fabric of language are part of an attempt to unlearn and unravel the predominant linguistic structures of a speech community, thereby invoking the possibility of returning to a pre-habitual stage of language. The act of unlearning conventional sense-making mechanisms produces nonsensical inversions with mathematical accuracy. Maude rightly remarks that this brings language 'to the limits of both logic and linguistic transparency' (106)[102] but she interprets it in light of the loss of sense making faculty that resides in language. This reading suggests that these mathematical inversions suggest not a loss but a deliberate extrication from the signifying aspects of language, it is a voluntary act of un-remembering and exhausting language of any meaning whatsoever. This brings to the fore Deleuze's conception of 'language I" defining it as the 'atomic language in Beckett – disjunctive, abrupt, jerky, where enumeration replaces prepositions, and combinatorial relations replace syntactic relations – a language of names' (7)[103]. Through this exhausting combinatorial and inverted language, Beckett limns the fecundity of the nadir or nothingness whose infinite pluralities exterminate the confining nature of objectivity and rationality.

The fraught nothingness of Watt's language and movement is evident in the homophonic juxtaposition of his name Watt with the words watt and what. The narrative of the novel weaves in these paradoxes by twisting the notions of directional linearity and speed of electricity, with the eponymous hero's slow, steady, non-directional "funambulistic stagger" and the non-linear and static progression of the narrative. Rather than aligning Watt's material and linguistic manipulations with Tourette's, a syndrome which 'confounds and collapses distinctions between voluntary and involuntary action, biological and cultural formations, motor skills and linguistic activity…and body

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101 Beckett, Samuel, Fehsenfeld, Martha, Overbeck, Lois More, Craig, George, and Gunn, Daniel. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

102 Salisbury, Laura. "'What Is the Word': Beckett's Aphasic Modernism." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 17.1-2 (2008): 78- 126. Web.

103 Deleuze, Gilles, and Anthony Uhlmann. "The Exhausted." *SubStance* 24.3 (1995): 3-28. Web.

and mind' (Maude164)[104], we can see them in light of voluntary and agential modifications of language and movement that question the validity of received notions and dogmas pertaining linguistic expression and motion. Thus, Watt's manipulations despite seeming to be pathological and out of control are in fact voluntarily motivated and executed.

Watt's unceasing, and contradictory ambulation (walking forwards while facing backwards) not only project Beckett's linguistic and narratological manipulations but also position journey, intentionality, and failure as two crucial elements of his poetics. This can be instantiated when towards the end of the novel Watt collects his belongings and walks to the station. Before embarking on the journey, Watt accumulates his belongings, and dons them on his body according to their allocated purpose. He wears a hat, coat, and carries two grouse bags in a peculiar fashion:

> One of these bags was a grouse bag…with straps, and buckles with which it was generously provided, Watt held it by the neck as though it were a sandbag. The other of these bags was another and similar grousebag. It also Watt held by the neck, as though it were a club. (187)

To exacerbate the inconveniences of his gait and comportment, he wears a shoe and boot of different sizes on different feet. The former being a size smaller, while the latter being a size larger than Watt's feet. To defy recourse to any form of convenience and rationale, he wears both his socks on one foot. Unsurprisingly, that foot being the one on which he wears the smaller shoe of the asymmetrical pair:

> By wearing, on the foot that was too small, not one sock of his pair of socks, but both, and on the foot that was too large, not the other, but none, Watt strove in vain to correct this asymmetry. But logic was on his side, and he remained faithful, when involved in a journey of any length, to this distribution of his socks, in preference to the other three. (189)

The aforementioned instances are revelatory on multiple levels: they reveal how Watt's choices could potentially thwart mentalising which is the activity of thinking another's mind and assigning to them specific mental states and basically representing them[105]. Watt's actions cannot be explained and

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104 Maude, Ulrika. "'A Stirring Beyond Coming and Going': Beckett and Tourette's." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 17.1-2 (2008): 153-68. Web.

105 Goldman, Alvin I. *Simulating Minds : The Philosophy, Psychology, and Neuroscience of Mindreading*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. Print..

foretold on the basis of either theorising[106], or rationalising[107], or simulating[108]. Ironically, his rationale and prediction defying actions are by no chance spontaneous and non-agential: they are a manifestation of comprehensive and conscious mental permutations. Thus, these counter intuitive choices not only become highly intentional thereby counteracting any notions of uncontrolled pathology but also make way for a kind of logic that stems from the illogical, as the narrator suggests 'but logic was on [Watt's] side'. This demonstrates that the sense or logic that Beckett aims to foster here is one where nonsense, failure, slowness, discomfort and un-remembering assume preferentiality not as a result of loss of agency and control, but as a consequence of willingly escaping the banality of habit and satisfaction by embracing failure and receding into the realm of liminality, which as Bernini aptly puts, represents a state of 'undeveloped situatedness in the world' (47)[109] where language and locomotion ("logomotion") become continually impeded yet persistent.

Antithetical to any suggestions of a decisive conclusion, *Watt* maintains its recurring motif of journey and wandering. Watt dispenses with destination/s and direction/s, and fulsomely embraces the road with its meandering undulations. Movement becomes its own narrative that refuses to resolve itself and judiciously employs both inter-facultative and inter-corporeal resources for its own sake and gratification. The confluence of unremitting roads, inexorable physical motion and non-sequential thoughts, complement the elements of an incoherent narrative, where the beginning and end dwindle into a potent form of nothingness imbued with an incessant chain of permutations, combinations, and hyper reflexivity, where all is in a state of flux, resonating with Beckett's most pervasive idea that, 'nothing is more real than nothing' (Knowlson, 375)[110]. In *Watt,* the creative fecundity of nothingness is given form and content through the deployment of movement and nomadism. Since nomadism has no determined end, it facilitates in Beckett ending (or suspending) the novel at the juncture of nomadic uncertainty, where the hierarchies of logical movement and absolute finality collapse into a ditch of stasis, rest and continuation.

The Trilogy

Beckett's thematic concerns with nomadism, unceasing movement and nothingness take a drastic turn in his subsequent novels: *Molloy, Malone Dies,* and *The Unnameable.* These novels provide a

106 Naïve psychological theory used by people to evaluate others' minds. (ibid,.)

107 Giving reasons why others make a specific choice. (ibid,.)

108 Emulating and adopting another's mental state of mind. (ibid,.)

109 Bernini, Marco. "Crawling Creating Creatures: On Beckett's Liminal Minds." *European Journal of English Studies* 19.1 (2015): 39-54. Web.

110 Ibid,.

poignant picture of stunted and impaired motion undertaken in the vastest and smallest of spaces. The idea of minimality that had its fledgling appearance in *Murphy* and expansion in *Watt*, sees its heightened expression in *The Trilogy*, where movement acts as a medium of "un-selving"[111] one's self. This section shall demonstrate what "unselving" means in the context of motion; and how unselving impacts the spatio-temporal, inter/extra-corporeal and inter-facultative nature of movement. Consistent with the central premise of the chapter, this section puts forth the centrality of motion in Beckett's *Trilogy* in commensuration with the kind of creative and ethical resonances examined already in his earlier work. In correspondence with *Murphy* and *Watt*, *The Trilogy* too delineates journey as the central force of narrative progression, with the singular feature that here Beckett imparts a literary shape to the philosophical ideas of atomic[112] and monadic motion[113] both climaxing in the quintessential Beckettian poetics of absolute nothingness of "where now? Who now? When now?" (331).

The novels in *The Trilogy* are essentially monologues of the protagonists, spoken with negligible consideration for conventional temporal sequence, plot, pronouns, even relations between discernible fact and fiction. In abandoning such familiar novelistic tenets, Beckett metamorphoses his characters into thing-less and nameless non-material entities that gradually become immobile but not and never simply motionless. Here Beckett experiments with the idea of reptilian motion that is horizontal and minimal – that which is simultaneously dynamic and static, and initial and final. The section examines the contradictory dynamics of impaired movements as manifest in each of these novels in the chronological order of their English publications – *Molloy* (1955), *Malone Dies* (1956), and *The Unnnamable* (1958).

Molloy

The previous section on *Watt* has argued that the titular protagonist, despite his physical limitations, willingly and consciously manoeuvres his body to perform his contorted gait. It has also brought to the fore how actively Watt exhausts the possibilities of language and motion, making his manipulations controlled rather than aberrant and pathological. Fundamentally, through these suppositions, the section on *Watt* tried to showcase how movement and journey assume primary significance in the

111 Un-selving stands in a stark opposition to the modern suppositions of a sense of self. It juxtaposes with ipseity which is 'The vital and self-coinciding subject of experience or first-person perspective on the world" (428). By un-selving, Beckett seeks to undo the authority of the first-person perspective. Instead, he introduces multiple voices, and identities in a single entity that preclude the possibilities of having a coherent sense of self.

Sass, and Parnas. "Schizophrenia, Consciousness, and the Self." *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 29.3 (2003): 427-44. Web.

Barry, Elizabeth. "All in My Head: Beckett, Schizophrenia and the Self." *Journal of Medical Humanities* 37.2 (2016): 183-92. Web.

112 Ackerley defines as 'atomist cosmos [as] a teeming infinitude of atoms, uniting and dispersing in a torrent of ceaseless activity, motion both causeless and endless' (116). "Samuel Beckett and the Physical Continuum." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 25.1 (2016): 110-31. Web.

113 'Leibniz defined monads as simple substances that possess neither part, extension nor figure; their substance is non-quantitative. This differentiated his monads from the indivisible atoms.' (ibid.124)

novel as a literary device deployed to articulate and complicate ideas around habit, intentionality, consciousness, failure and nothingness. The current section on *Molloy* intends to augment the role of journey and embodied movement in the said novel. The purpose of this section is to put forth how Beckett allocates his disabled characters a firm sense of agency and ownership even when they suffer continual disintegration and dissolution of both embodiment and cognition, thereby making intentionality, hyper-reflexivity, liminality and selfhood more and more complex.

Molloy, narrated in the form of a monologue, is divided into two parts, documenting the journey of the protagonists, the first being the titular hero Molloy himself and the other his alter ego Moran. The first half is dedicated to Molloy's odyssey to his mother's place that essentially begins from and ends at nowhere. Molloy has already suspended the prerequisites of going on a journey, that is, having a planned route and a purpose. Other discernible features that cloud his excursion are his debilitating memory, limping body and absolute feeling of uncertainty, but these impediments do not hinder him from embarking on a journey. On the contrary, Molloy meticulously mounts the bicycle (although he does not remember owning one) and initiates the adventure:

> Crippled though I was, I was no mean cyclist, at that period. This is how I went about it. I fastened my crutches to the crossbar, one on either side, I propped the foot of my stiff leg (I forget which, now they're both stiff) on the projecting front axle, and I peddled with the other. (13)[114]

Molloy riding the bicycle despite his physical limitations projects the body's infinite resources that perpetually enable it to keep moving even as it confronts impairments. He manoeuvres his legs and crutches in motions that are comfortable to him but may seem awkward and anomalous to a typically bodied spectator. His assertion that his crippled state was by no means a hindrance to him being a cyclist also gestures towards his awareness of an abled body ideal pervasive in the socio-cultural milieu.

Beckett projects his disabled characters not as abstract metaphysical entities trapped in an insurmountable existential void of suffering, but as individuals who are mistreated and manhandled for bearing visible marks of disability that arouse derision, pity, disgust and fear in the onlooker/s. This can be instantiated when we consider how his journey is sporadically halted by infringements

114 Beckett, Samuel. *Molloy.* Everyman's Library: London, 2015. Print.

from the hetero-normative outer world. At one instance, he is manhandled and humiliated by the police for resting at a public place in an indecent posture. This exhibits the social reception of disabilities, especially those that are conspicuous such as physical enfeeblements that manifest their repercussions in a person's carriage, ambulation, and speed. Molloy is heckled by the police in breach of public decency because, as an object of abjection, he is 'a deplorable example for the people who need to be encouraged, in their bitter toil, and to have before their eyes manifestations of strengths only, of courage and of joy, without which they might collapse, at the end of the day, and roll on the ground' (23). Beckett's deployment of humour is reflective of a strong ethical stance adopted against a society that demonises physical limitations by promulgating a culture of shame. By sketching the literal spectacle of Molloy's infirmity, and putting the socially prevalent disdainful conception of disability in direct words without a dint of exaggeration, Beckett cleverly manipulates the subject and object of humour, where Molloy is transformed into the laughing subject who derides and ridicules the society for being so fragile in its inflexibility that any conspicuous sign of physical limitation, in its own terms, may cause it to crumble apart.

This form of humour is unlike David Sloane's crip-humour which suggests disability as a universal condition, and crip-humour as a literary strategy that invites all abled and disabled readers to laugh at their own limitations and disabilities. He remarks 'laughing *as* and *at* and *with* the disabled is always laughing *as* and *at* and *with* ourselves' (131).[115] Beckett, however has a different technique – his humour does not spring from deriding disability, rather it makes normalcy and its outlook towards disability a laughable category. The depiction of disability intermingled with humour, need not, however, be construed as Beckett's "anethical" stance – which Shane Weller describes as, 'double movement both towards and away from any ethical position' (219)[116]. In contrast, Beckett initiates more ethical practices of perceiving and understanding disability. In representing Molloy as the percipi, the novel inevitably creates a wide space for the percipere, whose very absence in the narrative positions the reader as one who, in turn, has to confront the grim scene in its stark visceral reality. In the end, the reader is left to face his/her prejudices, while the protagonist blatantly peddles away on his bicycle, resuming his journey. Interestingly, Beckett also creates a dehiscence between Molloy and the so-called law abiding citizens of the society. Molloy is an un-worlded character also because he willingly falls outside the pre-ordained social constructs:

115 Sloane, Peter. *David Foster Wallace and the Body*. Routledge Studies in Contemporary Literature, 2019. Print.

116 Weller, Shane. "NOT RIGHTLY HUMAN: Beckett and Animality." *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* 19 (2008): 211-21. Web.

> Now the sergeant, content to threaten me with ruler, was little by little rewarded for his pains by the discovery that I had no papers in the sense that this word had a sense for him. Nor any occupation, nor any domicile, that my surname escaped me for the moment, and that I was on my way to my mother's, whose charity kept me dying. (20)

His inability to produce the documents that the sergeant asks him for, combined with his indifference to even beginning to comprehend the significance of the term is reflective of a subtle rebellious streak that most Beckett's characters inhabit and exhibit. The jobless, homeless, nameless (for he could not recollect his father's name) and even language-less Molloy is devoid of a worldly identity. In so being, he is useless to a culture that observes a "systematical decorum" and imposes obligations on those who do not surrender to its dictates. Molloy is voluntarily outside the rigid social mould, in that he is not only apathetic towards it but, if required, is resistant to succumbing to its demands. He defiantly eludes the fixed structures both despite and through his physicality. This blatant defiance to social customs in conjunction with perpetual motion is entrenched in Geulingian[117] philosophy which advocates the futility of the outer world and man's actions in it, ('Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil velis')[118] while emphasising on the need for self-inspection ("Inspectio Sui")[119]. This form of withdrawal from the world into a state of self-imposed seclusion conjures up a highly motion-oriented plot which, instead of propagating self-inspection, conjures up a space for perpetual action that is both agential, and failure and freedom oriented.

Movement: Atomic to Monadic

The trope of journey in Molloy has often been studied as representing 'a quest, [which being] deprived of a reachable goal becomes devoid of meaning…ultimately producing only physical deterioration; [where]…intentionality and teleology are interrogated, frustrated and toyed with' (Maude 87)[120]. Marco Bernini calls this intermingling of motility with unreachability of goals as a "broken teleo-dynamics". He further remarks that 'plans, purposes or e-motions through which self and consciousness emerge and develop are never internally generated or endorsed by Beckett's

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117 Arnoldus Geulincx (1624–69): Flemish philosopher whose *Ethica* were of lasting fascination to Beckett. Born in Antwerp, he studied philosophy and theology at Louvain, where he became philosopher in 1646… Deeply influenced by Descartes and the Cartesian Guillaume Phillipi, his later works are rooted in the rationalist tradition … Beckett encountered Geulincx at the Ecole Normale, but read him closely early in 1936, well into the writing of *Murphy* … He took fifty closely typed pages of notes, mostly from *Ethica*, fascinated, he told MacGreevy, by its conviction that the sub speci aeternitatis vision is the only excuse for remaining alive. He would later tell scholars of his work that Geulincx's 'Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil vales' was one place to begin. That ethical axiom become for SB the foundation of doubt and humility , the betise that underpins his life's work. (224) Ackerley, Chris, and Gontarski, S. E. *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett: A Reader's Guide to His Works, Life, and Thought.* 1st ed. New York: Grove, 2004. Print.

118 'Wherein you are worth nothing, there you should want nothing'. (17) Tucker, David. *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx: Tracing 'a Literary Fantasia'.* London ; New York: Continuum International Pub., 2012. Print.

119 Self- inspection

120 Maude, Ulrika. *Beckett, Technology and the Body.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

creatures' (45)[121]. Diverging from these interpretations, this inquiry suggests that movement in *Molloy*, despite bringing physical deterioration is highly intentional and voluntarily devoid of destination. Controverting the claims that intentionality and teleology are thwarted and remain un-generated, this section will look into how movement generates and renews embodied consciousness in the characters, which not only positions intentionality as the central driving force, but also imparts agency and ownership to Beckett's characters, even in the midst of physical dissolution and loss of verticality.

Molloy's non-directional navigation to his mother's place through the wilderness can be read as an exploration of his bodily potentialities. In that his expedition commences with one stiff leg but concludes with the stiffening of both legs and the "loss of half his toes" (60). The pleasure that Molloy finds in moving acquires a kind of buoyancy. He moves in the direction of the wind with absolute control of his gait and command over the grip of his crutches:

> There is rapture or there should be, in the motion crutches give. It is a series of light flights, skimming the ground. You take off, you land through the thronging sound in wind and limb, who have to fasten one foot to the ground before they dare lift the other. (69)

The arduous details with which Molloy reports his movements with the aid of his crutches suggest a hyper reflexive awareness that is not entirely the consequence of a limp, or of physical enfeeblement that compels him to practice greater caution, it must not be confused with a kind of self-consciousness that is too embarrassed to cause the body to fall, instead, it is an awareness that registers the fluidity of motion and the ever-changing corpus of physical aptitudes. This liberates the body from the ennui of habit and consequently annihilates the corpus of memory. As Beckett affirmed:

> That man with a good memory does not remember anything because he does not forget anything. His memory is uniform, a creature of routine, at once condition and function of his impeccable habit, an instrument of reference instead of an instrument of discovery.[122]

121 Bernini, M. "Crawling Creating Creatures : On Beckett's Liminal Minds." *European Journal of English Studies* (2015): 39-54. Web.

122 Beckett, Samuel, and Joyce, James. *Our Exagmination round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress. American Ed.; James Joyce/Finnegans Wake: A Symposium.* 1972. Print.

In discarding the debilitating effects of habit and memory, Beckett sharply derails the phenomenological propositions of proprioception, body image, body schema and the self-knowing consciousness. The theses of Gallagher and Merleau-Ponty are pertinent in gaining an understanding of these concepts. As stated earlier in the present study, Merleau-Ponty elaborated on the concepts of intentionality and pre-reflectivity. He also propounded on the relevance of proprioception in one's spatial orientation in the world, defining proprioception, 'as the subject's felt sense of the body in tune with itself, and the external environment. It is the attunement of our body image with the habituated surroundings both of which are deeply ingrained in the cogito so much so that the subject does not require conscious effort to exist in their prescribed world' (305)[123]. Gallagher made further interventions and defined the body image[124], body schema[125], in order to bring to fore how the body is absolutely indispensable in an organism's spatial organization and habituality. Though both phenomenologists affirmed the convergence of the embodied and intellectual facets, like learning and memory, in the effective organization of an individual in his/her surroundings, Gallagher adopted a more sophisticated framework to define it. He distinguished between the noetic and pre-noetic structures in facilitating an organism's ongoing interactions with the outside world where the former 'includes perception memory and judgment, etc' (32)[126], and the latter encompasses the beginning of the formation and assimilation of memory, these are those 'factors that shape the noetic in implicit ways' (32)[127]. Beckett, however, implements an anoetic method in which physicality, lived history, memory and language become increasingly minimal.

Following on this, Molloy and Moran initiate the attainment of the anoetic stage to transform into 'creatures without awareness of the self, who as a result [are] able to respond naturally and unselfconsciously' (Knowlson 633)[128]. The un-selving, and unselfconsciousness of the characters is delineated through the gradual breakdown of vertical movements into horizontal, slow, slithering motions that culminate into gentle, and minimal stirrings, akin to a monadic flux of unceasing and indivisible motion. Bernini observes the gradual dissolution of locomotion and teleology as 'two fundamental features of Beckett's liminal minds – two core (dys)functional elements of their undeveloped situatedness in the world' (47)[129]. The 'undeveloped situatedness in the world', which is

123 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962. Print. International Library of Philosophy and Scientific Method.

124 'Body image consists of a system of perceptions, attitudes and beliefs pertaining to one's body'(50). Gallagher, Shaun, and Oxford University Press. *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Oxford Scholarship Online. Philosophy Module. Web.

125 'Body schema involves certain motor capacities, abilities, and habits that both enable
and control movement and the maintenance of posture'. (ibid 52)

126 Ibid,.

127 Ibid,.

128 Knowlson, James. *Damned to Fame : The Life of Samuel Beckett*. London: Bloomsbury, 1996. Print.

129 Bernini, M. "Crawling Creating Creatures : On Beckett's Liminal Minds." *European Journal of English Studies* (2015): 39-54. Web.

often seen as dysfunctional can also be viewed as the emergence of the minimal monadic self. Analogous to Leibniz's monads – 'the indestructible, uncreated, and inimitable elements, whose essence is activity (motion)' (314)[130], the monadic self too, continues to move and resume its journey despite being devoid of memory, verticality, language, identity and even a higher consciousness. This is discernible in Molloy who renews his expedition even when he is confronted with the gradual stiffening of the other leg and shortening of the previously stiff leg. He pays heed to these changes and tries to assimilate them into the existing repertoire of his kinetic aptitudes, while meticulously noting minute details and possibilities:

> It was therefore on the old bad leg that I often longed to lean, between one crutch stroke and the next. For while still extremely sensitive, it was less so than the other, or it was equally so, if you like, but it did not seem so, to me, because of its seniority. But I couldn't! What? Lean on it. For it was shortening, don't forget, whereas the other, though stiffening, was not yet shortening, or so far behind its fellow…sometimes to be sure when I was lucky enough to chance on a road conveniently cambered, or by taking advantage of a not too deep ditch or any other breach of surface, I managed to lengthen my short leg for a short time. But it had done no work for so long that it did not know how to go about it. (85).

Even while depicting Molloy's continuous adjustments within his physical limitations, Beckett does not make him a subject of the tedium of habit. Rather he is exposed to the renewed challenges posed by his body and environment, which cause exhaustion and fatigue but never boredom. The perpetual worsening of the body triggers Molloy to be more receptive to his embodiment. All his movements are a result of his meticulous contemplation, which makes him aware of the minutest of transformations that are underway. Thus his locomotion not only becomes more agential and controlled but also constitutes a stronger sense of ownership. Although Molloy cannot regulate the pace of his physical deterioration, he can still monitor those changes and claim more ownership over how he moves and why he moves the way he does. This is because he is the sole designer and executor of his motility given the fact that it is neither spontaneous nor pre-reflective. Gallagher differentiates between the sense of ownership and agency in his landmark study *The Phenomenological Mind* [131] in which the former denotes the dimension that 'it is I who performed the movement' (187)[132] and that

130 Ackerley, Chris, and Gontarski, S. E. *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett : A Reader's Guide to His Works, Life, and Thought*. 1st ed. New York: Grove, 2004. Print.

131 Zahavi, Dan. *The Phenomenological Mind.* Third ed. 2021. Web.

132 Ibid,.

'the movement is mine' (187)[133]; and the latter means that 'I choose this gesture' (187)[134] and that 'it was volitionally mine' (187)[135].

It cannot be dismissed that Molloy's hypereflexivity is a consequence of his rapidly deteriorating embodiment, for as he continues his amblings the list of his physical ineptitudes increases. In addition to his legs and the loss of his toes, he had 'a few corns, bunions, ingrowing nails, and a tendency to cramp' (88), that made frequent stops indispensable to his progress and with that his hyper-reflection starts to increase. Gallagher compares this state of introspective hyper reflection with Sass's claim that 'such hyper-reflection can generate a body image that exaggerates proprioceptive and kinesthetic sensations and interferes with the normal functioning of the normally tacit body schema' (205)[136]. While it is evident that Molloy's proprioceptive awareness and body image were continually becoming increasingly introspective, but unlike Sass's, and Gallagher's assertions, the exaggerated introspection is not functioning as pathologically disruptive to the normal functioning of motility, but instead is assisting him in continuing his expedition however demanding and slow. This shows that any mode of being that swerves from the dogmatic model of "normalcy", namely, speed, habit, spontaneity and pre-reflectivity, are pronounced pathological. Beckett, through his poetics of movement, becomes what Connor calls 'the most important inaugurator of a mode of aesthetic defection from speed' (153)[137]. In addition to this, Beckett also initiates a mode of being that seeks recurrent recourse to resting, failing, falling and crawling. This becomes conspicuous when one day whilst taking his mandatory rest, Molloy abruptly recalls crawling not just as an alternative to continue moving, but also as a divergence from the human norm of vertiginous motion:

> But, he who moves in this way, crawling on his belly, like a reptile, no sooner comes to rest than he begins to rest...And in this way I moved onwards in the forest, slowly, but with a certain regularity, and I covered my fifteen paces, day in and day out, without killing myself. And I even crawled on my back, plunging my crutches blindly behind me into the thickets, and with the black boughs from sky to my closing eyes. (99)

133 Ibid,.

134 Ibid,.

135 Ibid,.

136 Gallagher, Shaun. *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Web.

137 Connor, Steven. *Beckett, Modernism and the Material Imagination*. 2014. Web.

These remaining traces of movement in an unstill body resonate with monadic motion where the body, stripped of its more pronounced and perceptible actions, plummets to the ground, thereby assuming a minimalism of motion, which despite being seemingly minute and negligible, are nonetheless performed with utmost effort. Contrary to the critical reception of Beckett's crawling characters as "omnidolent", this study suggests that crawling is not only the last sustaining form of motion, but paradoxically it is more exacting on the muscles. It is also the best compromise between motion and stasis, beckoning Molloy's infinite regression to a state of dissolution of all the learned and habitual attributes of mobility. Because crawling encompasses liminal access to the world and consequently thwarts the formation of an ongoing epistemology, it becomes a desired end for Molloy. Therefore, the progressive lapse in narrative control, is not a feature of chaotic impoverishment rather it is a conduit to the mechanisms of failure, where categories of success, knowledge, destination and meaning making are voluntarily forsaken. This kind of minimality/ impoverishment of movement is not only monadic, for it is ceaseless, but it is also Geulingian because it seeks incapacity non-understanding and "fidelity to failing" (125)[138] . This corresponds with Beckett's own assertion that ' to be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail … failure is his world and the shrink from it desertion'(125)[139]. The "interrupted-ness" and "impeded logomotion"[140] in Beckett's novels is not an inevitable and undesired consequence, but it is a meticulous artistic expression of an endeavour that must necessarily end in 'the futility of physical action [and] … its being tied to with such immediacy to an epistemological incapacity' (Tucker 134).[141] It can be said that the theme of failure in Beckett's oeuvre with regard to movement and language is not an accidental one, but rather it is an expression of Beckett's views on artistic expression, whose very inability or failure to progress and express function as its only motivations.

Beckett continues to augment the a-noetic and monadic facet in the second half of the novel that documents Moran's unsuccessful search operation to find Molloy. Advancing the central premise of purposeless nomadic wandering, Moran's reconnaissance sketches the aporic dialectics of chasing, hiding and hunting, where all three permeate into one another and herald a systemic breakdown of

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138 Beckett, Samuel. *Proust; Three Dialogues.* London: Calder & Boyars, 1949. Print.

139 Ibid.

140" Impeded logomotion" is Marco Bernini's conception. He defines it as:

> The functional analogy between language and locomotion is literally instantiated in Beckett's liminal creatures, even if it operates negatively. Beckett's characters are often completely … or progressively … reduced to a degree of immobility that parallels the impoverishment of their narrative control and understanding in a mutual deterioration that I would synthesise as impeded logomotion. (44). Bernini, M. "Crawling Creating Creatures : On Beckett's Liminal Minds." *European Journal of English Studies* (2015): 39-54. Web.

141 Tucker, David. *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx : Tracing 'a Literary Fantasia'*. London ; New York: Continuum International Pub., 2012. Print..

Moran from a mechanical contrivance to an un-selved non-being. Unlike Molloy's journey to his mother, which at least sustained the faint glimmer of a destination, Moran's hunt for Molloy dispels even the flimsy illusion of a destination and the possibility of a purposive end. Moran commences his journey to "the Molloy land" with utmost zeal and blatant indifference to crucial amenities. He is bereft of an itinerary, map, sufficient money, required clothes, 'and even the very nature of the work to be done and consequently the required means to be employed' (139). Moran is not ignorant of these missing requirements but enlists them in an inventory-like fashion, not in the least to gesture to their indispensability, but to put forth their absence with an air of disdain. All he had with him was his haversack and an umbrella to assist him through his journey. This illustrates how failure intertwined with incapacity is an engineered process in Beckett's works. Such an interpretation casts agency and reflexivity in a different light than the one put forth by Elizabeth Barry in her essay 'One's Own Company' where she analyses Beckett's deployment of the middle voice[142] as a device signifying failure of the will and loss of agency where the action of the subject remains restricted to the subject. She views Beckett's characters as apathetic beings who passively record the vicissitudes of their bodies without being able to modulate their existence on their own terms. She writes:

> The processes of living and dying are described in language that elides the question of agency, something that only emphasizes the protagonists' failure to control their own physical existence and to determine its term. (121)

This chapter contradicts Barry's account by proposing that failure is an agential outcome of Beckett's texts, it is a monitored occurrence. Moran's journey exemplifies this facet which from the very outset is directed towards un-achievability, this is not because of his tenuous sense of agency but due to his cognizance that this expedition must definitely end with not finding Molloy, thus failure is the very end towards which the narrative and protagonist are directed. Failure in *Molloy* is a stand-alone category, which is to say that it dissolves the binaries of success and accomplishment; the narrative inexorably progresses towards failure and un-achievability as its only primary ends.

142 'The technical definition of the middle voice, unmarked in English, is that it denotes an action performed by the subject whose effect is limited to the subject rather than directed outwards to another person or thing (active) or received from another source (passive)'. Barry, Elizabeth. "One's Own Company: Agency, Identity and the Middle Voice in the Work of Samuel Beckett." *Journal of Modern Literature* 31.2 (2007): 115-32. Web.

Furthermore, Barry expounds on Beckett's use of reflexivity and the body as 'a sly joke on [their] own powerlessness to unite mind and body, to identify subject and reflexive object' (121). It is discernible in the novel that Moran and Molloy are powerless in stopping their bodies from disintegrating. But on the other hand, it can be witnessed that rehabilitation is active even in the midst of frailties and disintegration. Both the protagonists accept and perpetually assimilate those changes forging a renewed body-mind connect, notwithstanding their fluctuating connection. Thus, movement becomes more agential and controlled even in the wake of unceasing deterioration. Moran is knock-kneed from the very outset, his growing attention to the needs of his body is discernible when during the course of his journey he is confronted with a piercing pain in his knee. Analogous to Molloy, who cannot exactly tell which of his legs was stiffening, Moran is unable to specify which one of the two knees was shooting off the "fulgurating pain". The disconcerting pain in question has already stiffened the knees to an extent that he is incapable of standing and bending. But these impediments were not insuperable since he did eventually manage to stand up:

> I was unable to get up. That is to say, I did get up finally to be sure, I simply had to, but by dint of what exertions! Unable, Unable, it's easy to talk about being unable, whereas in reality nothing is more difficult. Because of the will I suppose, which the least opposition seems to lash into fury. And this explains no doubt how it was I despaired at first of ever bending my leg again and then, a little later, through sheer determination, did succeed in bending it, slightly. The anchylosis was not total. (157)

Moran's visceral account of knee pain and the struggle of his will to overcome resistance reflects the indomitable persistence of the body. The gradual collapse of his normal gait brings him closer to understanding the kinetic reserves of the body, which for him are not products of learning, experience, history or attunement, but the spontaneous animation of his embodiment and the will to conjure up a different method of standing. Since Moran successfully surmounts his inability with more concentrated efforts than usual, it obliterates boredom and indolence, rather, movement becomes a source of discovery. This is evident when, following the nascent stiffening of the knee, Moran begins to explore the comforts of the horizontal. He finds its pleasing sensations, 'possessed of unsuspected delights' (158). As he discovers the pleasures of forsaking verticality, he astutely registers the enduring process of his material debilitation and assimilates the changes wrought by it. Moran forsakes the habitual and espouses the instinctive. His debilitation makes him content because it detaches him from the bounds of civilization and Being. Moran steadily acquires a larval origin that shuns worldly structures as he keenly marches towards his non-being. The latter half of his journey aptly illustrates this for, on

returning home, he is unable to recognise himself. The profound metamorphoses foisted on him by the daunting expedition, has made him physically and mentally unrecognizable:

> Physically speaking it seemed to me that I was now becoming rapidly unrecognisable, when I passed my hands over my face, in a characteristic and now more than ever pardonable gesture, the face my hands felt was not my face any more, and the hands my face felt were my hands no longer. And yet the gist of the sensation was the same as in the far off days, when I was well shaven and perfumed and proud of my intellectual's soft white hands. And to tell the truth I not only knew who I was, but I had a sharper and clearer sense of my identity than ever before, in spite of its deep lesions and the wounds with which it was covered. (192)

The immensity of flux in his physicality has only brought him closer to his sense of identity, which appears to him more vividly fragmented than ever before. In so being, Moran does not become a pathological specimen of multiple identity disorder, or of loss of self as many Beckett critics have construed him to be[143]. Rather he is both a non-human and an un-selved entity signifying an indivisible multiplicity of being and finally Beckett's answer to his own conundrum beginning from 'what is it to have been?'[144]. In that Moran does not lament the change, in fact, the unrecognisability fails to startle or distress him. He registers the transformations with an indifference, but also with extreme awareness. He is no longer the civilized, well-kept Moran who was a mere contrivance of reason and intellect. Instead, the journey and its subsequent debilitations had made him "eternally larval". He transforms into someone who had 'the courage of imperfection of not-being'[145] (102). On his return home, Moran steadily unstructures himself from all the prerequisites of being a man, for he says 'I have been a man long enough, I shall not put up with it anymore, I shall not try anymore. I shall never light this lamp again I am going to blow it out and go into the garden' (199). The conclusion of *Molloy* on a note of non-being configures a seamless segue into the second novel of the trilogy titled *Malone Dies*, which is an account of the ramblings and stirrings of the bedridden eponymous protagonist. The forthcoming section shall expound on this further and highlight the role movement plays in matters of will, consciousness and monadic unrest.

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143 Sass, and Parnas. "Schizophrenia, Consciousness, and the Self." *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 29.3 (2003): 427-44. Web.

Barry, Elizabeth. "All in My Head: Beckett, Schizophrenia and the Self." *Journal of Medical Humanities* 37.2 (2016): 183-92. Web.

144 Gontarski, S.E. "What It Is to Have Been": Bergson and Beckett on Movement, Multiplicity and Representation." *Journal of Modern Literature* 34.2 (2011): 65. Web.

145 Beckett, Samuel, Fehsenfeld, Martha, Overbeck, Lois More, Craig, George, and Gunn, Daniel. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

Malone Dies: The Monadic Unrest

The second novel of *The Trilogy*, titled *Malone Dies* was published in 1956. The novel can be read as a continuation of the narrative from *Molloy*, where the textual progression of "thinglessness", and "namelessness", has reached a point of "shapelessness, and speechlessness" (204). *Malone Dies*, revolves around the memory confabulations of the impotent eponymous hero, Malone. The nomadism of Murphy, Watt, Molloy, and Moran ceases in Malone's fixed vegetative stirrings. Beckett's disagreement with the notion of journey as a mode of "*nosce te ipsum*[146]*"* (Knowlson 247) and preference of a paradoxical notion of journey as "*carpe te ipsum"* (247) sees its most vehement expression in *Malone Dies*, explored not through the trope of journey but that of fixity. Controverting Knowlson's assertion that to "gather thyself" beckons to the absence of the seed of motion, this reading argues that in *Malone Dies* the seed of motion sees its outgrowths in the form of relentless stirring, pulling and pushing, and tossing and turning. By delving into the idea of "reptilian brain"[147] and the "minimal self"[148], this chapter suggests that liminal movement in *Malone Dies* is imbued with both ontological and ethical repercussions that portray a meta-narrative of infinite failure, which Abbot aptly articulates as 'a willing immersion in the modes of failure' (13)[149].

Analogous to *Molloy*, where the dissolution of sequential action occurs in simultaneity with that of the protagonists' physical mobility, *Malone Dies*, charts out the absolute abatement of plot, time and a vast landscape all of which are mimed by the protagonist's impotence:

> My body is what is called, unadvisedly perhaps, impotent. There is virtually nothing it can do. Sometimes I miss not being able to crawl around anymore…My arms, once they are in position can exert a certain force. But I find it hard to guide them. Perhaps the red nucleus has faded…My sight, and hearing are very bad, on the vast main no light but reflected gleams. All my senses are trained full on me, me. Dark and silent and

146 In a letter to Mary Manning, on German novels, on 18 January, 1937, Beckett wrote: 'Journey anyway is the wrong figure. How can one travel to that from which one cannot move away? Das Notwendige Bleineb [The Necessary Staying Put] is more like it … But the heroic , the *nosce te ipsum* [Know Thyself], that these Germans see as a journey, is merely a different attitude to things and chairs , a setting of will, muscles and fingers against them, a slow creation of the desire and power to stand up and walk away, a life consecrated to the possibility of escape, if not necessarily the fact, to a real freedom of choice when the fire comes…The point is that the *nosce te ipsum* is no more mobile than the *carpe te ipsum* [gather thyself]'.

147 'The reptilian brain is the part of the brain inherited from 'earlier and less complex life forms' (Schleifer, 2001, 563), and that hence threatens the boundary between human and animal" (164) Maude, Ulrika. "'A Stirring Beyond Coming and Going': Beckett and Tourette's." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 17.1-2 (2008): 153-68. Web.

148 'Minimal self: Phenomenologically, that is, in terms of how one experiences it, a con- sciousness of oneself as an immediate subject of experience, unextended in time. The min- imal self almost certainly depends on brain processes and an ecologically embedded body, but one does not have to know or be aware of this to have an experience that still counts as a self-experience'. Gallagher, Shaun. "Philosophical Conceptions of the Self: Implications for Cognitive Science."*Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4.1 (2000): 14-21. Web.

149 Abbott, H. Porter., and Project Muse. *Real Mysteries : Narrative and the Unknowable*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2013. Web.

> stale, I am no prey for them. I am far from the sounds of blood and death, immured. (211)

Malone's description of his embodiment not only shows how acutely conscious he is of his existing liminalities but also shows that notwithstanding all the dysfunctionalities he is not entirely impotent. Just like the "minimal self", Malone's body configures as the "minimal body" that despite being stripped of its mobility manages to conceive and execute affordable actions. Since Malone cannot physically navigate the surrounding space, the stick gets ascribed with a physicality that is replete with sensorial faculties, like the haptic and acoustic (both of which have apparently gone dead on the protagonist). The excerpts enumerated below delineate the way Malone operates his stick, beckoning to a kind of symbiotic relationship where the latter augments the lost sentience of the former:

> When I want to eat I hook the table with my stick and draw it to me. It is on castors, it comes squeaking and lurching towards me. When I need it no longer I sent it back to its place by the door. (209)

> What a misfortune my pencil has slipped from my fingers, for I have only just exceeded in recovering in after forty-eights hours…of intermittent efforts. What my stick lacks is a little prehensile proboscis like the nocturnal tapir's. (252)

These extracts resonate with Beckett's intensive treatment of things and objects that accompany, enable and aid in movement. However impotent and immobile Malone maybe, he still persistently attempts to retrieve his pencil. The horizontality of movement that made its foray in *Molloy*, realizes its maximum expression in *Malone Dies*, because the protagonist has even lost his ability to crawl which is the most extreme form of horizontal motion in Beckett's fiction. Thus, movement only occurs in bed and extends to the boundaries of the room. But the overwhelming limitation of space and physical aptitude do not impede motion, but work as factors that regulate and define the trajectory of motion that takes place. This gestures to Steven Connor's remark on Beckett's persistent deployment of athleticism that overturns the binaries of speed, victory and agility. He writes:

> What kind of athleticism is this, so expertly unsure of its capacities, so supple in its [incompetences], so alertly self-defeating, so dextrously maladroit, returning with such indefatigable fatigue to the being that is in question of its being?

> A kind of its own. (26)[150]

As Connor remarks, Beckett's indefatigable athleticism lies in being inadept; and in inventing scenarios of its own failure. This opens up channels to deconstruct and reformulate received notions of athleticism that are unrelentingly associated with vigor, attunement and practised agility. In adopting failure as a preferred mode of athleticism, Beckett's novels inaugurate a kind of ethical reading where incapacity and persistence gain eminence over success. In so doing, these works do not suggest the emergence of a new form of heroism, rather they move away from the category of heroism to showcase a new mode of being where habit, winning and speed dissipate into losing, 'active striving and contriving to…win out against winning' (Connor 26).

Malone Dies diverges from the previous novels because movement is not taking place as part of a nomadic journey but manifests itself as a stroll across houses, fields, garden/s, and asylums, or as tossing and turning, rummaging, groping and stirring in a minute room. Another significant disparity is that unlike *Molloy*, where movement was both experienced and described by the narrator/s, in *Malone Dies* the narrator is not always undertaking or experiencing motion but is also describing it with a third person perspective which insinuates the idea of witnessing motion bearing trenchant ethical implications where the impotent narrator functions as a detached commentator. Thus Malone portrays the persistence of struggle ("active striving") on two markedly embodied levels: one is the descriptive struggle that is portrayed in his stories, and the second is his physical struggle manifest in the intermittent retrievals of objects around him. Although Beckett's fictive personae possess limitations in the form of physical and mental impairments which make them slow and sluggish, they are never too eager to forsake existence in the face of challenges. Macmann, the central character in Malone's story is afflicted with ataxia[151] which affects the organic synchronization of his physical movements. He seems to have lost his sense of agency over his motions, nonetheless he continues to perform them as ordained by the dictates of his will:

> And indeed he had devoted a great part of his existence to these little tasks, that is to say of the half or quarter of his existence associated with more or less coordinated movements of the body. For he had to, he had to if he wished to go on coming and going on the earth. (278)

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150 *Beckett, Modernism and the Material Imagination*. Cambridge UP, 2014. Web.

151 "Ataxia is derived from a Greek word meaning 'lack of order' and can be defined as impairment of coordination in the absence of significant muscle weakness. Patients complain of poor balance when walking and sitting, difficulties with accurate hand movements, tremor and slurred speech". Burke, Georgina, and Simon Hammans. "Ataxia." *Medicine,* vol. 40, no. 8, 2012, pp. 435–439.

Macmann's perpetual coming and going also configure the latent theme of Beckett's oeuvre, where the endless to and fro of his characters is predominantly an embodied experience. Ostensibly, Macmann's life revolves around his wanderings from place to place not just as an adopted mode of life, but as an inevitable and indispensable condition of existence. The following passages encapsulate how for Beckett the animate is inextricably linked to the kinetic:

> He will therefore rise, whether he likes it or not, and proceed by other places to another place, and the by others still to yet another…And so on, on, for long years. Because in order not to die you must come and go, come and go. (263)

The compulsive and convulsive desire to move that pulsates in Malone's fictional characters also thrives in Malone himself. Despite being impotent and fixed, his fictional narrative is sporadically halted either by his misadventures with his stick and exercise book, or by his reminiscences that are distinctly animate and motion oriented – 'I have been walking certainly, all my life I have been walking, except the first two months since I have been here' (208). There are instances in the novel when he strives to formulate a way of moving his bed, or of inducing in himself a tiny jolt:

> I have demanded certain movements from my legs and even feet, I know them well and could feel the effort they made to obey. I have lived with them that little space of time filled with drama, between the message received and the piteous response. To old dogs the hour comes when, whistled by their master setting forth with his stick at dawn, they cannot string after him. (211)

> For it is obvious to me now that by making a more intelligent use of my stick I might have extracted myself from the bed and perhaps even got myself back into it … That would have introduced a little variety into my decomposition. (290)

Thus, vacillating between the extremes of impotence and movement, play and tedium, premeditation and procrastination, Malone finds himself eternally engrossed in the maze of narration, digression and motion. From asserting, 'I shall not give up yet' (217) to successively reiterating "what tedium", he jostles in the ebb and flow of renouncing and persisting. Malone relentlessly strives to harness the locomotive potential that might well be hiding underneath his impotence. Given the limitations of his embodiment, minuteness of his immediate space and consequently the minimality of his motion,

Malone's efforts at hyper-reflectively navigating the subsisting kinesis in him are prodigious even if their manifestation may be hardly visible. This also shows Beckett's astute observation and knowledge of physical enfeeblements, echoing Fifield's claim that 'Beckett seems to know that any effort will be at once too much and not enough'[152] (158).

Malone Dies could be construed as a document that charts out the ultimate monadic impulse of motion that attains its "mere most minimum" at the expense of utmost exertion. The novel, which on one side comprises refrains like "what tedium" is concurrently juxtaposed with undefeated effort and iterations like: 'the fear of falling is a source of many a folly' (289), 'all is not then yet irrevocably lost' (290), 'try and go on' (316). According to Barry 'such bodily actions… represent an ontological dilemma that underpins Beckett's writing' (119)[153], for it vehemently depicts that the 'elan vital or struggle for life' (268) is galvanised in bodily movement and actions – '[He] only rose again when the elan vital or struggle for life began to prod him in the arse again' (245). This monadic unrest in *Malone Dies* encompasses the overbearing motifs of failure, defeat and hopelessness on one side, while concomitantly bearing undercurrents of hope, determination and persistent will on the other. Beckett's novel establishes that the will to strive is most certainly contained within the will to move and that 'insofar as [the former] continues to strive, [it] must [also] fail to go beyond itself' (Connor 57)[154]. Boxall is right in expounding that the real locus of connection between Molloy, Moran and Malone is 'organised around these failures' of motion (comings and goings) and the dismantling of the body. Moreover, the chain of metamorphosis – commencing from Molloy to Malone – takes a more fragmented form of shapelessness in the Unnamable, who is: "short of a leg" (359) and 'incapable of the smallest movement, yet in spite of these limitations he will still persist to write and go on, even though he is 'afraid, as always, of going on' (344).

The Unnamable: From Shapelessness to Source-lessness

The Unnamable is the final novel of the trilogy, the very title of which resists specificity, not only signifying something that is without a name, but that which just cannot be named, identified and put in a single fortified narrative structure, despite the effort. The title itself resonates with the semantics of effort and failure. The undercurrents of "shaplessness", "speechlessness" and "thinglessness" in

152 Fifield, Peter. *The Late Modernist Style in Samuel Beckett and Emmanuel Levina,* Palgrave Newyork, 2013. Print.

153 Barry, Elizabeth. "One's Own Company: Agency, Identity and the Middle Voice in the Work of Samuel Beckett." Journal of Modern Literature 31.2 (2007): 115-32. Web.

154 Connor, Steven. *The Madness of Knowledge: On Wisdom, Ignorance and Fantasies of Knowing.* Reaktion Books: London, 2019. Print.

Malone Dies, have culminated into namelessness, source-less-ness, timeless-ness and space-less-ness in the *Unnamable*. The inaugural remarks of the novel, 'Where now? Who now? When now?' (331), affirm absolute dissolution of any vestiges of a unified self-hood and spatio-temporal organisation. The lack of these unities, contrary to being an abrasive suspension of literary tradition is a unifying factor of the *Trilogy* that condenses the central thematic concern of lessness and failure in Beckett's canon. Unlike the previous novels that comprise a single affirming and negating protagonist, *The Unnamable* comprises "vice-existers" (foils) named Basil, Mahood, and Worm, along with the previous protagonists (Watt, Molloy, Malone) and an indeterminable multitudes referred to as "they". The text is fraught with an overwhelming excess of less-ness, where abundance and scarcity confound the readers. The landscape, imbued with the indeterminable or absent oneness of self, time and space, seems both vast and minimal.

The portrayal of movement in the text demonstrates stillness and gyration, which complements the aforementioned notions of profusion and minimality. Amidst the aporic vociferations of the Unnamable is the description of motion signifying an organised pattern of convulsive revolution:

> The place may well be vast, as it may well measure twelve feet in diameter, it comes to the same thing as far as discerning the limits is concerned. I like to think I occupy the centre but nothing is less certain…For it if were it would follow that Molloy, wheeling about me as he does, would issue from the enceinte at every revolution which is manifestly impossible. (335)

> It is equally possible, I do not deny it, that I too am in perpetual motion accompanied by Malone, as the earth by its moon. (336)

It is discernible that motion is a ceaseless occurrence in *The Unnamable* because the will to move is eternally at work. In the novel, Beckett intertwines motion with Schopenhauer's proposition of the "will", which is an individual's primal desires, wants, strivings, and wishes. Will is represented through the intellect, and one's actions and motivations. According to Schopenhauer, the will is above and beyond intelligibility because 'the will exists beyond time and space, but we can know it only in its separate acts...The will is causeless, but we conceive of all actions as motivated. The will is "an endless striving"' (255)[155]. For Schopenhauer, the will is a force that keeps the intellect under

155 O'Hara, J. D. "Where There's a Will There's a Way out: Beckett and Schopenhauer." *College Literature*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1981, pp. 249–270. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25111404.

its penal servitude. It is only by freeing the intellect from will that one can one attain freedom from worldliness and reach a spiritual pinnacle. Though Beckett adopts the central premise of will as a timeless, space-less and causeless perpetual striving, he does not allow it to take shape into representations of the intellect. This is not to liberate the intellect so that his characters could achieve a state of sublime spirituality and unworldliness, but to allow them to keep striving and failing, without espousing a spiritual unworldliness of detachment but to redeem themselves from needless obligations of having to be, of having to speak, of having to make sense and most importantly of having to know. The willing is the will of ignorance that is forever curious to abandon knowledge and embrace aporia. It is the ignorance that resides in continued less-ness of time, space, speed, self, and goal and end-oriented strivings. The pervasive drive, in the words of the protagonist, is 'to continue, since I could not do otherwise, to the best of my declining powers, in the motion which had been imparted to me. This obligation, and the quasi-impossibility of fulfilling it' (364). Embodied motion provides a window for the will to strive again, fail again and never forsake. It keeps the Unnamable alive to the prospect of setting forth on road again:

> I invented it all in the hope it would console me, help me to go on, allow me to think of myself as somewhere on a road, moving between as beginning and an end, gaining ground, losing ground, getting lost, but somehow in the long run making headway. (357)

The will to move marks the origin of ruptured but continual beginnings in the novel. These beginnings start to take shape when the Unnamable confronts his abrogated selves, or his "vice-existers" that claim to be him. The first of which is single-legged and single-armed Mahood, being recounted as completing his "inward spirals" with the help of a crutch. The Unnamable ventriloquizes Mahood's biography as a long homebound journey where 'to go on and get on has been my only care…there was never any room for anything else. Never once have I stopped. My halts do not count. There purpose was to enable me to go on' (365). This reiterates the centrality of motion in the text as a narrative that could only be propelled by providing possibilities of animate movement. While *The Unnamable*'s syntax exterminates any scope for sense making, character development, and logical progression of plot, it is only the emerging patterns and prospect of embodied movement that govern the forward progression of the narrative, along with providing a more expansive room for the un-selving of the Unnamable.

This culminates with the last vice-exister named Worm. He is the most primordial signifier of life. Worm represents involution towards the primal and elemental stages of life beckoning towards the

first impulse of animate awakening which the Unnamable exclaims as, 'Oh look, life again, life everywhere and always, the life that's on every tongue, the only possible' (398). The Unnamable describes Worm as the de-humanized primordial organism, "barely protoplasmic". Being without limbs and organs, it is unable to stir, 'but perhaps one day it will stir, the day when the little effort of the early stages, infinitely weak, will have become, by dint of repetition, a great effort, strong enough to tear him from where he lies' (401). Contra to the usual interpretations of the vermicular as representing decomposition, this reading contends that the vermicular in *The Unnamable* consolidates the eternal return of persistence, failure, multiplicity and finally the affirmation of never-having-to-be while also having-to-be. That is, although Beckett resists the romantic conception of a unified and uniform selfhood that remains impervious to transformations across the space-time continuum, yet the multiplicity of selves exhibited by the Unnamable does not ascribe to a chaotic, disjunct non-self [156], instead, Beckett's notion of unselving is analogous to that of steadily becoming and metamorphosing. Sypher's reading of "defensive humanism" in Beckett is pertinent in this regard, he writes, 'defeated as he is, Beckett implies in his anti-novels that we can not, in spite of everything, annihilate selfhood—there is [always] a self that wishes to die quietly' (156)[157]. Hence, we cannot dispense away with the configurations of selfhood and self, even if these become increasingly pliable and multiple. This is apparent in the concluding passage of the novel which hinges on the dual affirmation of perpetual becoming and moving on. A substantial reassertion of it is discernible in the final proclamation of the Unnamable:

> Perhaps they carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door that opens on my story, that would surprise me if it opens, it will be I, it will be the silence, I don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on. (476)

In the end, the door opens for the Unnamable, who standing on the threshold of language, space, failure and stasis, opts to go on despite his incapacities. In so doing, both the text and the Unnamable finally exceed the containment of their own narrative, 'persisting as shattered, twitching remnants that can't go on, but somehow do' (Murray 31)[158]. Interestingly, this directs us to the hornet metaphor deployed earlier in the novel, where the Unnamable speaks of the vertiginous dread of flight experienced by the hornets, who are foisted ad-hoc out of their nest and take their first flight without prior lesson: 'from

156 To be explored in Chapter Three of the thesis.

157 Sypher, Wylie. *Loss of the Self in Modern Literature and Art*. New York: Random House, 1962. Print.

158 Murray, Rachel, "Vermicular Origins: The Creative Evolution of Samuel Beckett's worm". *Journal of Science and Literature*, vol.2016, no.2, 2016, pp. 19-35.

this vertiginous panic as of hornets smoked out of their nest, once a certain degree of terror has been exceeded' (366). Akin to this analogy, it could be said that the protagonist feels the same fright of motion when positioned on the threshold of the outer world and his story, nonetheless he willingly decides to go 'as best as [he] can' (459).

The Emerging Textual Aesthetics, Ethics and Politics of Movement

Motion configures as the centrifugal force in Beckett's texts, propelling the narrative when language and plot perpetually fail the author. Controverting the tradition of looking into impaired hyper-reflexive motion as a signifier of doomed endeavor, aborted effort, indolence and dysfunctionality, this chapter tried to establish the primacy of motion in Beckett's narratives in depicting the themes of persistence and resilience, bringing to the fore the epigram of the chapter, and Beckett's oft quoted assertion, 'all before. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better' (Knowlson 674)[159].

The indispensability of movement in the texts discussed above resonates with the idea that Beckett's textual aesthetics are deeply embedded in motion, so much so, that the experience of reading too becomes profoundly embodied. This can be instantiated by succinctly tracing the inception of the chapter from *Murphy* to *The Unnamable,* each of the eponymous heroes – namely, Murphy, Watt, Molloy, Moran, Malone, and the Unnamable – begins and sustains their textual existence in motion and materiality. For instance, Murphy is introduced in the text, neither by his name, nor speech, but by being positioned in his rocking chair, 'he sat naked in his rocking chair, of undressed teak, guaranteed not to crack, warp, shrink, corrode, or creak at night. It was his own, it never left him' (1). The narrative progresses by providing copious description of his stravague across London, where the readers are not only made cognizant of his location, but more so his comportment, posture and regularity of stride. Murphy ceases to exist textually once his embodiment and kinesis have ceased to be.

The is also true for Watt, whose "funambulistic stagger," frequent halts in ditches, and perambulation from the train station to Mr. Knott's settlement is what forms the text. Watt's twisted speech and backward motion are intertwined with each other. Almost giving the impression that

159 Knowlson, James. *Damned to Fame : The Life of Samuel Beckett.* London: Bloomsbury, 1996. Print.

language cannot occur in isolation, movement thus becomes an indispensable part of Watt's linguistic origin. Yet again aligning textual aesthetics with embodied kinesis.

Molloy, Malone Dies, and The Unnamable constitute similar textual aesthetics of motion with a varied exploration of the dynamic character of movement. In *Molloy*, Beckett delineates the steady involution of motion from vertical to horizontal. The novel is propelled by Molloy's and subsequently Moran's movement, which becomes a conduit through which they become will-less, un-selved and un-worlded. Movement here functions as a trope that perpetuates the themes of becoming, metamorphoses, monadic flux and less-ness. *Malone Dies* explores thinglessness, namelessness, shapelessness and speechlessness through the static convulsions of the protagonist and his misadventures with the stick. The text incorporates text-within-a-text-technique, where Malone's stories and the main text are entirely movement oriented, where the former segue into the latter's accidents with his stick, pencil, exercise book, possessions etc. The final novel, *The Unnamable*, adds the dimension of going on, becoming and exceeding the delimitations of the text, embodiment and self even in the face of overwhelming incapacities and dread. It is not incorrect to say that akin to Beckett's heroes, his texts too possess "the seed of motion," which dominates and defines the textual aesthetics.

Beckett's aesthetics of motion also delineate poignant ethical implications. The fragmented motion in the novels portrayed through the protagonists' worsening physicality bring to the fore the reception of disability in an abled body universe and also unearths "epistemic injustices"[160] rampant in a hetero-normative world where the voice of disability is subsumed under the impositions of typical bodied perspectives. The limping and staggering gait which is a sign of extreme physical duress for an abled onlooker is the organic mode of walking for the protagonists. The frequent subjection of disabled characters to shame, humiliation and derision unravels a practice of injustice that is also deeply political. The ruthless ostracising of the disabled by the law is evident in Molloy being taken to the police station where he was charged for the 'violation of…public order and public decency' (18), on account of his way of resting on the public road. Another instance of this is the charitable offering made to him by a woman from The Salvation Army to which Molloy advised:

> Let me tell you this, when social workers offer you, free, gratis, and for nothing, something to hinder you from swooning, which with them is an obsession, it is useless

160 See footnote, 7

> to recoil, they will pursue you to the ends of the earth, the vomitory in their hands. The Salvation Army is no better. (22)

This is a humorous jibe on charities and government run institutions which propagate an invidious culture against disability where infantilising charity and demonising law and order go hand in hand. Instances like these bring to the fore the exigent need to implement the phenomenological "epoche" or the bracketing of natural attitude, which advocates for a suspension of presuppositions, assumptions, prejudices, and preferences for one way of being over another. This approach is most suitable for an appreciation, recognition, and inclusion of enfeebled, and impaired bodies without being labelled as challenged or disabled. What Beckett's impaired characters tell us is that each and every mode of physicality must be appreciated for its own sake. Even if one person is slower than the other and requires more bodily awareness to undertake an otherwise easy movement, it is not because one is more abled than the other but because every individual differs from another in his/her repertoire of kinetic potential and abilities. Thus no one is deprecatingly crippled or superhumanly abled.

Chapter 2: 'Ah yes, things have their life, this is what I always say, things have a life': On the Deployments of Matter and Materiality in Beckett's Dramatic Works

Beckett's plays conjure a performative landscape replete with things in their manifold and multifarious manifestations. Akin to Mr. Knott's penchant for rearranging the furnishings in his tiny room in *Watt*, Malone's perpetual wielding of his stick and unceasing hide and seek with his pencil and notebook in *Malone Dies*, and Molloy's exacting excursion on his bicycle and crutches in *Molloy,* Beckett's dramatic works delineate an infrastructure of material minutiae where every object counts in all its exhaustive possibilities of function and desuetude. This chapter offers an exploration of the performative dimension of excessive engagement with things in Beckett's dramatic works; it builds on and progresses from the previous chapter's focus on the phenomenological description of elements of impaired movement, hyper-reflexivity and failure. In this chapter the focus on the material world will be examined in dramatic and action-oriented scenarios, where motion is a choreography structured in and through the finer details of performative spaces, objects, settings and lighting. Unlike novels and short fiction, drama is written for action and performance, therefore the experience of witnessing and/or reading it is one of immersion in what feels like phenomenological immediacy. The feeling of inhabiting the present compels a different kind of attention and awareness of sensory involvement produced by multisensory means, especially through visual and auditory apparatuses. In considering these specific nuances of drama, this chapter will explore the idea that, in Beckett's plays, motion, both impaired and typical, and material involvement with props and assistive technology, complicate the very construction of the categories of abled and disabled, not so much by assimilating or dissolving one into the other, but by putting forth a novel interpretation and, in effect, a performative deconstruction of both these constructs.

The select texts include *Waiting for Godot (1956)– WfG; All that Fall (1957)– ATF* from now on*; Endgame (1958); Happy Days (1963);* and *Rough for Theater I (1976)*[161]*– RfT.* The discursivity and stage direction of the plays in question are fraught with the elaborate embroilment of things with action and materiality, in that Beckett enmeshes specific objects with individual embodiments and their organic movements. The array of embodiments and their subtleties constitute both disabled and typical characters, the former comprising Clov and Hamm, and Nell and Nagg– *Endgame*; A and B – *RfTI*; Mrs. and Mr. Rooney– *ATF;* and Pozzo and Lucky– *WfG*; the latter includes Estragon and Vladimir– *WfG,* and Willie and Winnie– *Happy Days*.

161 These texts were also published in French, the dates cited in the chapter correspond with their English publication.

In Beckett's plays, the nuanced distinctions between types of embodiment are crucial in figuring out the kinds of objects his characters wield, and the manner and degree to which they do so. Thus, the experience of watching, reading and/or hearing Beckett's plays is inextricably steeped in the performance of matter/things and materiality/ body. By charting the deployments of matter and materiality, this chapter continues the exploration of Beckett as a writer of disability whose depiction of the vulnerability and failure of the human form as a universal human condition nonetheless resists making "disability" the primal or primary condition of all human materiality. In so doing Beckett's writings serve to resist the prominent disability scholar Lennard Davis's proposition of 'dismodernism'[162], with its insistence on our shared disablement: 'the dismodernist subject is in fact disabled, only completed by technology and by interventions' (241)[163]– a stance that concludes with a tenuous affirmation propounding 'impairment [as] the rule, and normalcy [as] the fantasy. Dependence [as] the reality, and independence, grandiose thinking' (241)[164].

"Dismodernism" and Beckett's Poetics of Disabilities and Technology

The apparent limitation of Davis's thesis lies in its obliteration of disability in its normativisation: disability is made invisible in its rendering as a universal norm. The conflating of physical inaptitude with acute impairment thwarts the individuality of disability as a distinct category. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have appropriately critiqued this approach, arguing that such universalising of disability 'undermines our ability to pay attention to abject populations peripheral to the project of living. There is not a level playing field that all bodies occupy, and calling for all to recognize levels of insufficiency will do little to accomplish meaningful systems change' (48)[165]. Their evaluation of insufficiency as distinct from abject impairments is highly suggestive in understanding Beckett's dramatic personae – who, though they are perpetually troubled, isolated, ill-at-ease and vulnerable– are not all disabled. His characters, both physically abled and disabled, are constituted as an assortment of movements– some, for example, manifest restless circular pacing (May in *Footfalls*), while others have a tired or shuffling gait (Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* , and Krapp in *Krapp's Last Tape*); some project a balletic crispness of motion (*Quad*), while some characters move about miming as if to follow a command (*Ghost Trio*). On the other side there are also those characters who are without a leg (B, and Nagg*)*; those who cannot move (Winnie, and Hamm); those with a stiff gait (Clov, Mrs.Rooney); while

162 Davis, Lennard J. *The Disability Studies Reader.* London: Routledge, 1997. Print.

163 Ibid,.

164 Ibid,.

165 Mitchell David, Snyder Sharon, "Minority Model: From liberal to neoliberal futures of disability", *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*. ed by Watson, Nick, and Vehmas, Simo. Second ed. 2020. Print.

there are some who are deaf and blind (Pozzo, and Lucky) and consequently show more hyper-consciousness when walking, like Watt who is almost paralysed by hyper-reflexive awareness. Beckett has created an array of characters who manifest some kind of physical discomfort which can often also stem from or involve purely psychological and mental perturbations without exhibiting explicit physical impairments which demonstrates that 'Beckett grounds subjectivity, its enigmatic play of continuity and discontinuity, firmly in the body' (Maude 22)[166]: so much so, that subjectivity itself is primarily constituted as the material and the embodied. Maude writes that 'while Beckett insists on grounding subjectivity in the body, it radically departs from Merleau-Ponty's work in its stern refusal of all forms of transcendence' (22)[167]. This non-transcendence occurs because the subjective and the embodied in Beckett are ailing and failing entities whose impulse towards meaning and signification is forever thwarted to make way for the projection of uncanny sensations and unsettling feelings.

This visceral dimension attached to motion goes beyond external physical realism as suggested in Beckett's assertion that 'I am not unduly concerned with intelligibility. I hope the piece may work on the nerves of the audience not its intellect'[168]. Notwithstanding the fact that the aforementioned statement was spoken in reference to the play *Not I*, its validity can be extended to the entire corpus of Beckett's drama. The impact of its enigmatic and visceral attributes is also felt by scholars and critics, as suggested in Enoch Brater's comment: 'in Beckett's theatre, however, we are drawn to such consideration of plot only secondarily. It is the visual impact, not the priorities of themes and variation, which commands our attention' (23)[169]. Since Beckett's plays cannot be analyzed within the lens of plot, dialogue and realist themes, the impact of their enigmatic and visceral attributes is potently delineated in the obsessive engagement of the dramatic personae with tools and objects.

Analogous to the sundry conglomeration of locomotive postures detailed above, Beckett's plays copiously abound with props and assistive technology: hats, boots, ropes, whips, ladders, telescopes, wheelchairs, sticks, glasses, gaffes, to name a few. Here the deployment of stage props and embodied technology complements that of the novels with the modification that, in the dramatic works, it is also imbued with a sense of immediacy and performative poignancy both of which reconfigure the modalities of spatio-temporal orientation of the characters in the visual and acoustic landscapes of the plays. Critics and scholars have rigorously analysed the presence of technology in Beckett's drama;

166 Maude, Ulrika. *Beckett, Technology and the Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

167 Ibid,.

168 In a 1973 interview with Jessica Tandy, after the performance of *Not I* in the Zellerbach Theatre, Philadelphia.

169 Brater, Enoch. *Beyond Minimalism: Beckett's Late Style in the Theater*. New York: OUP, 1987. Print.

these include Tajiri, who in his book, *Samuel Beckett and the Prosthetic Body,* makes a compelling case for reading technology in Beckett as an extension and constriction of the material body where the inner and outer are confounded in an amalgam of prosthetic voices and prosthetic vision emanating either from the radio (in *Krapp's Last Tape, All That Fall*), or from the camera eye (in works like *Film, Ill Seen Ill Said, Nacht und Träume, Eh Joe* etc.)[170]. Similarly, Maude perceives Beckett's use of technology in light of the virtualisation and digitisation of bodies where technology replicates and reconfigures the body 'often in problematic ways' (9)[171]. Speaking of Beckett's television plays she writes:

> If *Nacht and Träume* explores the comforting fantasy of disembodiment, *What Where,* Beckett's last play, concludes with a realisation of its horrors. While technology in Beckett's writing serves to augment and enhance the perceptual powers of the subject, the binarized, post-human ghosts of *What Where* stage the effects of the body's eradication. (124) [172]

These critical stances are directed towards Beckett's use of technology as an artistic medium for theatre. Even though these articulations dub visual and sound technologies as prosthesis, they do not do so without having recourse to the metaphors of prosthetic technology as extensions of the body and senses. Steven Connor's take on the use of spool in *Krapp's Last Tape* (1976) offers a divergent reading – according to Connor, the eponymous protagonists' compulsive playing, pausing, replaying and recording of the tapes from his past birthdays and present one – especially his 39th and 69th – are signifiers of a discontinuous "temporal embodiment" which keeps us both in touch and out of reach with our lost selves and expired temporalities[173]. This reading is noteworthy because it throws light on the significations of Krapp's constant tampering and tinkering with the tape, where the spool is a material presence on stage which connotes the semantics and semiotics of subjectivity, temporality and memories – as opposed to being only an enabling and absent technological medium for dramatization. Connor's approach to technology as a thing is complemented by that of Alexander Price who views the presence of objects and dirty things – specifically the dirty bedrooms – in Beckett's television plays *Eh Joe* (1965), and *Ghost Trio* (1977) in light of Thing Theories, which:

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170 Tajiri, Yoshiki. Samuel Beckett and the Prosthetic Body: The Organs and Senses in Modernism. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

171 Maude, Ulrika. *Beckett, Technology and the Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

172 Ibid,.

173 Connor, Steven. *Beckett, Modernism and the Material Imagination*. 2014. Web.

> acknowledge the historical, cultural, and social significance of the material world, they often focus on those instances when objects fall outside, as Brown puts it, the 'circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition' (2004, 4), in order to envisage the material world in new ways. In his introduction to 'Thing Theory', Brown asserts the importance of recognising moments of physical or metaphysical interruption to an object's conventional utility, suggesting that it leads to an important alternative or newfound perception of the materiality of that object, what he calls the object's 'thingness'. (4)[174]

Price augments Brown's notion of the "thingness of things" in which objects become enigmatic, incomprehensible and beyond the configurations of linguistic apprehension. Price deconstructs the thingness of the bed in *Eh Joe* where its utility is warped and unstable, for it is never used to sleep in, but is instead exhausted as a ghostly presence and an arresting image of multiple defunct soiled objects – also including a mattress – around which the titular hero builds his despairingly static existence encompassing: 'going from cupboard to bed, kneeling down, looking under bed, getting up, sitting down on edge of bed as when discovered, beginning to relax' (361)[175]. Price's perspicacious analysis of these texts culminates in the explication of thingness in Beckett as the author's move towards the realm of the ambiguous material world where things either resist conventional functionality or incapacitate us in utilitising them at all. It is by virtue of this quasi agency, continues Price, that the material world is fraught with the 'potential to shape the very matter of human existence' (174)[176]. This reading shall further expound upon the thingness of Beckett's material world, not so much in light of what Price understands as its overwhelming desuetude and dysfunctionality, but instead, thingness as an immersive motif of exhaustive, eccentric and highly individualized utilization through which Beckett's dramatis personae establish haptic contact with the immediate and far-reaching world. To embark upon these instantiations this chapter shall now look at Beckett's play *Happy Days* and navigate its alliance of materiality and the material world, especially when these are inextricably imbricated with layers of immobility and confinement. Reversing the trajectory of the previous chapter that mapped the creaturisation of characters from standing and walking entities to crawling and convulsing organisms, this chapter shall commence its enquiry with physically immobile characters, steadily progressing towards those who are impaired – *RfTI*, *Endgame,* and *ATF* – and finally examining the abled limping tramps of *WfG*.

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174 Quoted in Price, Alexander. "Beckett's Bedrooms: On Dirty Things and Thing Theory." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 23.2 (2014): 155-77. Web

175 Beckett, Samuel. *The Complete Dramatic Works*. London: Faber, 2006. Print.

176 Quoted in Price, Alexander. "Beckett's Bedrooms: On Dirty Things and Thing Theory." Journal of Beckett Studies 23.2 (2014): 155-77. Web.

Beckett's Materialist Mise-en-scène

It might be argued that *Happy Days* (1963) is Beckett's most overtly materialist play. First performed in New York at the Cherry Lane Theatre, the play revolves around the protagonist couple Winnie and Willie's separate yet conjoined material worlds that are suffused with multiple objects, namely: handbag, lipstick, mirror, toothbrush, toothpaste, hair-brush, parasol, pistol, postcard, newspaper, musical box, phial of medicine, hat, spectacles and a glass. All animate activities on the stage are facilitated by the characters' digging into, gathering and handling of things, as if this is their only means to fully confront their bodies, existence and environment. The uncanniness of this spectacle is heightened by the concomitance of unceasing activity with immobility, constriction, and the dearth of phatic and haptic connectivity. The two-act play opens with Willie and Winnie entrenched in the undulating scorched grass of the landscape:

> *Embedded up to above her waist in exact centre of mound, WINNIE. About fifty, well-preserved, blonde for preference, plump, arms and shoulders bare, low bodice, big bosom, pearl necklace. She is discovered sleeping, her arms on the ground before her, her head on her arms. Beside her on ground to her left a capacious black bag, shopping variety, and to her right a collapsible collapsed parasol, beak of handle emerging from sheath.*
>
> *To her right and rear, lying asleep on ground, hidden by mound, WILLIE. (138)*

The beginning juxtaposes the overtones of confinement, alienation and protracted burial with subtle vestiges of a minimalist life signifying a delayed end or gradual decomposition. The image of Winnie's exposed body parts jutting out of the mound of mud, her "capacious black purse", and the prostrate body of Willie beside her, delineate an optimal panorama for the "happy day" on the horizon. Winnie's day begins with the second tolling of the bell whereupon, after opening her eyes, she gazes ahead, takes a long pause, then throws back her head to gape at the zenith; this is yet again succeeded by a long pause dispelled by Willie's exclamations:

> Begin, Winnie. [Pause.] Begin your day, Winnie. [*Pause. She turns to bag, rummages in it without moving it from its place, brings out toothbrush, rummages again, brings out flat tube of toothpaste, turns back front, unscrews cap of tube, lays cap on ground,*

> *squeezes with difficulty small blob of paste on brush, holds tube in one hand and brushes teeth with other. She turns modestly aside and back to her right to spit out behind mound. In this position her eyes rest on WILLIE. She spits out. She cranes a little farther back and down. Loud*.]… *[examines tube, smile off]*– running out– *[looks for cap]*– ah well– *[finds cap]*– can't be helped– *[screws on cap]*– just one of those old things– *[lays down tube]*– another of those old things– *[turns towards bag]*– just can't be cured– *[rummages in bag]*– cannot be cured– *[brings out small mirror, turns back front]*– ah yes– *[inspects teeth in mirror]*

The barrage of activities followed by the forced pronouncement "begin your day" is mired in Winnie's immersion in the material world in which the mirror, the toothbrush, and the depleting tooth-paste conjure a materialist scaffolding enabling her to live out the new day by exhausting the functional potential of the things around her; to become aware of the gradual trickling away of the bare minimum essentials that sustain her; and finally to acknowledge her inability to steer, stop, or synchronise the delayed fizzling out of all that exists, because it "can't be helped" or "can't be cured". The entire play is full of Winnie's frenetic rummaging inside her bag to investigate and examine her possessions and immediate surroundings. Her continual engagement with her spectacles and the looking glass is particularly germane in this regard, for they enable her to read and locate her articles; to see all there is to be seen or, at the very best, what is rendered unseen. The very first instance of her wearing her spectacles to discern the writing on her toothbrush is a half successful attempt, not least because she is unable to read further, but the effort to go on any longer is simultaneously deemed unworthy and yet sufficient enough:

> "[*puts on spectacles*]– nothing to touch it– [*looks for toothbrush*]… [*takes up toothbrush*]– always said so– [*examines handle of brush*]– wish I had it– [*examines handle, reads*]– genuine … pure … what?– [*lays down brush*]… [*takes off spectacles*]… [*lays down spectacles*] – seen enough… woe woe is me –… to see what I see – [*looks for spectacles*] – ah yes – [*takes up spectacles*] – wouldn't miss it – [*starts polishing spectacles, breathing on lenses*] – or would I? – [*polishes*] – holy light – [*polishes*] – bob up out of dark – [*polishes*] – blaze of hellish light. [*Stops polishing, raises face to sky, pause, head back level, resumes polishing, stops polishing, cranes back to her right and down*.] Hoo-oo! ... can't complain – [looks for *spectacles*] – no no – [*takes up spectacles*] – mustn't complain – [*holds up spectacles, looks through lens*] – so much to be thankful for – [*looks through other lens*] – no pain – [*puts on*

> *spectacles*] – hardly any – [looks for toothbrush] – wonderful thing that – [*takes up toothbrush*] – nothing like it – [*examines handle of brush*] – slight headache sometimes – [*examines handle, reads*] – guaranteed … genuine … pure … what? – [*looks closer*] – genuine pure … – [*takes handkerchief from bodice*] –ah yes – [*shakes out handkerchief*] – occasional mild migraine – [*starts wiping handle of brush*] – it comes – [*wipes*] – then goes – [*wiping mechanically*] (139– 40).

This repetitive sequence of fiddling with the spectacles, toothbrush and handkerchief entwined with the incoherent utterances of Winnie's dramatic monologue, demonstrates how the most rudimentary forms of embodied objects might be of immense sense-making and ontological significance, even more so when all other avenues of knowing and apprehending are lost upon us. Winnie's spectacles bring into view the immediate and far-reaching panorama combining the proximate landscape (the spot of the brush), her embodiment (flickering headache) and the colossal horizon of hellish light above her, all of which is both overwhelming yet soothingly unmissable. The conscious groping for things is not a manifestation of disuse, non-utility and metaphysical disruption or interruption, as thing theorists would suggest, but instead the exhaustive utility of things is here profoundly imbricated within the metaphysical, worldly, embodied and ontological investigations that embolden further playing with things since one might never run out of the significations they engender.

The spectacle of the play resonates with Heidegger's stance in the essay, "The Question Concerning Technology", in which he claims that the relationship between being and technology cannot be adequately encapsulated under the purely instrumental realm of technology as a means and an end of human activity (5)[177]. Instead, Heidegger distinguishes technology from its essence, which he refers to as *techne;* here the former is "instrumental and anthropological", whilst the latter is a mode of revealing and bringing forth in which Being presents itself to us as beings. In simple terms, for Heidegger, our alliance with technology, ideally *techne*, should be an occurrence where individuals open themselves to the un-concealment of truth through which Being – in other words "whatever is" and everything that is – presents itself to us. Accordingly, for this revealing to take place, humans need to cease from exploiting technology as a standing reserve directed to fulfil predetermined end goals. In its lieu, for whatever is (Being) to reveal itself, humans need to be fully open and non-presumptuous towards this process of revealing. This is poignantly illustrated in Beckett's deployment of tools and objects, in which technology, even in its most rudimentary manifestations, is never entirely use

177 Paraphrased from Heidegger, Martin. *The Question concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1977. Print.

directed. Winnie's entanglement in her immediate material world is not one that is utterly goal or use directed; it is an open engagement which offers a never-ending phenomenon of bringing forth of whatever is. This is discernible in the fact that Winne's open exploration of the ambiguously narrow and expansive landscape and objects is imbued with multiple revelations, compelling her to enunciate:

> That is what I find so wonderful, that not a day goes by– [*smile*]– to speak in the old style– [*smile off]*– hardly a day, without some addition to one's knowledge however trifling, the addition I mean, provided one takes the pains, [*WILLIE's hand reappears with a postcard which he examines close to eyes.*] And if for some strange reason no further pains are possible, why then just close the eyes– [*she does so*]– and wait for the day to come– [*opens eyes*]– the happy day to come when flesh melts at so many degrees and the night of the moon has so many hundred hours. [*Pause.*] (143)

Besides facilitating the incessant cycle of incongruous, inconsequential information, the deployment of spectacles reveals another Heideggerian notion of vital import to phenomenology namely, *Vorhanden* or present-at-hand, and *Zuhanden* or ready-at-hand. These are for Heidegger the two primal modes of situating oneself in the world. The former signifies the starting point at which we encounter the world and other beings as primarily detached entities. Heidegger 'notes that much of the time we do not come across beings in a standoffish way, as present-at-hand objects. Instead, we encounter them as "ready-to- hand" [Zuhanden]. That is, as things to be used in a context of ongoing activity' (Ratcliffe 45)[178]. The value of the latter is that here we see things as ready to use in a particular context. Beckett aligns both perspectives by positioning Winnie as the central narrative voice that recounts the flux of life around her through a continuous process of visual surveying and reminiscing. The intriguing facet of this delineation is its intermittent taking on and off of spectacles, and looking glasses which trigger perception and intellection:

> Oh I say, what have we here? [*Bending head to ground, incredulous*.] Looks like life of some kind! [*Looks for spectacles, puts them on, bends closer. Pause*.] An emmet! [*Recoils. Shrill*.] Willie, an emmet, a live emmet! [*Seizes magnifying-glass, bends to ground again, inspects through glass.]* Where's it gone? [*Inspects*.] Ah! [*Follows its*

178 Ratcliffe, Matthew. *Feelings of Being : Phenomenology, Psychiatry, and the Sense of Reality*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

> *progress through grass*.] Has like a little white ball in its arms. *[Follows progress. Hand still. Pause.]* It's gone in. [*Continues a moment to gaze at spot through glass, then slowly straightens up, lays down glass, takes off spectacles and gazes before her, spectacles in hand. Finally.*] Like a little white ball. [*Long pause. Gesture to lay down spectacles.*] (147-48)

The gesture of wearing and holding glasses is a mode of verifying the presence of life. This wearable technology is a powerful source of perception, no less significant than the mediations of sound and visual technologies like the camera, radio and tape because, like them, vision technology here shapes and regulates perceptual information. The removal of both forms of glasses alone stimulates long monologues entwined with recollections, philosophical speculation and broken interactions:

> [*Pause. She lays down spectacles, gazes before her. Finally.*]
>
> WINNIE: [*Pause.*] The day is now well advanced. [*Smile.*] To speak in the old style. [*Smile off.]* And yet it is perhaps a little soon for my song. [Pause.] To sing too soon is a great mistake, I find. [*Turning towards bag.*] There is of course the bag. [*Looking at bag*.] The bag. [*Back front*.] Could I enumerate its contents? [*Pause.*] No. [*Pause*.] Could I, if some kind person were to come along and ask, What all have you got in that big black bag, Winnie? give an exhaustive answer? [*Pause.*] No. [*Pause*.] The depths in particular, who knows what treasures. [Pause.] What comforts. [*Turns to look at bag.]* Yes, there is the bag. [*Back front*.] But something tells me, Do not overdo the bag, Winnie, make use of it of course, let it help you … along, when stuck, by all means, but cast your mind forward, Winnie, to the time when words must fail – [*she closes eyes, pause, opens eyes]*– and do not overdo the bag. [*Pause. She turns to look at bag*.] Perhaps just one quick dip. [*She turns back front, closes eyes, throws out left arm, plunges hand in bag and brings out revolver. Disgusted.]*

Furthermore, these enunciations are imbued with both ready-to-hand and present-at-hand implications. The former is apparent in the readiness potential of the bag which might be optimally utilised at any given moment. The bag is an inexhaustible receptacle that holds the paraphernalia of her life, arranged in a constantly permutating order. But the present-at-hand resonates with the presence of a revolver which is completely out of context and bereft of any enactive possibilities. Nevertheless, Winnie does not entirely dismiss it, because this too has its place in the order of things. Beckett's instructions to the

actress Billie Laidlaw – who assayed Winnie in the 1979 production of the play – are quite explicit in this regard:

> The bag is all she has – look at it with affection … From the first you should know how she feels about it … When the bag is at the right height you peer in, see what things are there and then get them out. Peer, take, place. Peer, take, place. You peer more when you pick things up than when you put them down. Everything has its place. (Fehsenfeld, 53)[179]

Beckett's emphasis on the specific placement of things is crucial in navigating the spatial orientations of his staging where the positionality of objects and actors is mutually exclusive and within the bounds of some unknown peculiar order. In correspondence to the articles in the bag, Winnie and Willie too have a preordained place in the gradually mutating universe of the stage. The two are being sucked up and kept apart by the engulfing gravitational forces steadily progressing towards the ultimate failure of communication and motion condemning one (Winnie) to immobility, and the other (Willie) to speechlessness:

> WINNIE: Is gravity what it was, Willie, I fancy not. [*Pause.*] Yes, the feeling more and more that if I were not held– [*gesture*]– in this way, I would simply float up into the blue. [*Pause.*] And that perhaps some day the earth will yield and let me go, the pull is so great, yes, crack all round me and let me out. [*Pause.*] Don't you ever have that feeling, Willie, of being sucked up? [*Pause.*] Don't you have to cling on sometimes, Willie? [*Pause. She turns a little towards him*.] Willie.
>
> *[Pause.]*
>
> WILLIE: Sucked up? (151-52)

Despite being in proximity, both Winnie and Willie lead an exclusive existence which obstructs the prospect of collaboration and assimilation. The two are constituted by divergent corporeality: Winnie "who cannot move" (153) is partnered with Willie who "cannot speak". In the midst of the vast lacunae of embodied inabilities survives the material world of objects, the only one that sustains haptic contact between the two. We witness Willie and Winnie exchanging items like postcard and vial, although this

179 Fehsenfeld, M., "From the Perspective of an Actress/Critic: Ritual Patterns in Beckett's Happy Days". Ed. K. H. Burkman, *Myth and Ritual in the Plays of Samuel Beckett*. London and Toronto: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1987. Print.

gesture seldom reaches a meaningful exchange, yet it is their only conduit to feel physically together. Bereft of this, their presence and non-presence makes no difference to each other whatsoever:

> WINNIE: Ergo you are there. [*Pause*.] Oh no doubt you are dead, like the others, no doubt you have died, or gone away and left me, like the others, it doesn't matter, you are there. [*Pause. Eyes left*.] The bag too is there, the same as ever, I can see it. [*Pause. Eyes right. Louder*.] The bag is there, Willie, as good as ever. (160)

Yet again, it is the thereness of the bag that endures the complete disintegration of interface and existence. Yet surely this must not be construed simply as a demonstration of the quasi-agency of things as Price's argument does: 'Beckett invests the dirty furnishing with (quasi-)agency; it becomes pivotal in *constructing* the representation of…psychological unease, which, in turn, begins to expose the potency of the material world in Beckett's televisual composition' (167)[180]. Instead, things must be seen as powerful, life sustaining entities, exhaustively conglomerated, consolidated, manipulated and utilised by their human wielders. They bear the narrative of a life not so much as agential objects, but as semantic, semiotic signifiers of material needs, longing, desire, pleasure, insufficiency, haptic and phatic (in)communication, limitation, failure, feminine persistence, resilience and so on. This is what Beckett had envisioned for *Happy Days*, when speaking with Brenda Bruce, he avowed:

> Well I thought that the most dreadful thing that could happen to anybody, would be not to be allowed to sleep so that just as you're dropping off there'd be a 'Dong' and you'd have to keep awake; you're sinking into the ground alive and it's full of ants; and the sun is shining endlessly day and night and there is not a tree…there's no shade, nothing, and that bell wakes you up all the time and all you've got is a little parcel of things to see you through life…And I thought who would cope with that and go down singing, only a woman. (501)[181]

In light of this statement, it is hardly surprising to note that the title of the chapter bears Winnie's explication on the life of things: 'Ah yes, things have their life, that is what I always say, things have a life. [*Pause.*] Take my looking-glass, it doesn't need me. [*Pause.*] The bell. [*Pause.*] It hurts like a knife. [*Pause.*] A gouge. [*Pause.*] One cannot ignore it. [*Pause.*]' (162). Here things have a life because

180 Price, Alexander. "Beckett's Bedrooms: On Dirty Things and Thing Theory." Journal of Beckett Studies 23.2 (2014): 155-77. Web.

181 In an interview with Brenda Bruce from 1994. Knowlson, James. *Damned to Fame : The Life of Samuel Beckett*. London: Bloomsbury, 1996. Print.

they are laden with meaning and uses that Winnie ascribes to them and by the same token they are also independent – not agential or quasi agential – entities which will keep on existing, as waste or antiques, even in her absence. The vista of things, bodies, actions and gestures limned in *Happy Days* is sporadically reflected upon and absorbed by Winnie. Her pauses and halts after each iteration and movement create a trajectory of temporally frozen visual images, intended to press upon audiences the gravity of the situation. This spectacle conjures what Deleuze describes as the "language III" of Beckett's drama. It is unlike that of the novels for it is bereft of calculations, permutations and memories, but instead invokes an image which:

> doesn't define itself through the sublimeness of its content, but through its form – its "internal tension"– or through the force it gathers to make the void or to bore holes, to loosen the grip of words, to dry up the oozing of voices, so as to disengage itself from memory and reason: little alogical image, amnesic, almost aphasic, now standing in the void, now shivering in the open. The image is not an object but a "process". We don't understand the power of such images, however simple they appear from the point of view of the object. This is language III, neither that of names or of voices, but that of images, sounding, coloring. (8)[182]

The ineffability of the corporeal image, its presence outside the realm of words (content) as a pure manifestation(form) enables it to stand out and apart from the fabric of purely textual and discursive elements (plot, themes, sequential, dialogues). This severance of the image from text causes what Ato Quayson[183] describes as "short-circuiting"– a phenomenon where the flow of the narrative is broken by the emergence of bodily discomfort (mainly pain) and disability (54). According to Quayson, despite the rupture caused by these ailments, Becketts's texts inhibit their own further exploration, creating an "aesthetic nervousness", where the meaning and interpretation of disability perpetually remains hampered, manifesting as an "hermeneutical impasse" that establishes 'disability as an inarticulate and enigmatic tragic insight' (52).[184] The reading here, however, both adopts but also diverges from Quayson's claims: while short-circuiting is certainly embedded in Beckett's representation of disability, it surely does not transform into "aesthetic nervousness" or a deliberate reticence concerning further exploration of the impaired materiality. On the contrary, the image of

182 Deleuze, Gilles, and Anthony Uhlmann. "The Exhausted." *SubStance* 24.3 (1995): 3-28. Web.

183 Quayson, Ato. *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation*. Columbia University Press, 2007. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/quay13902. Accessed 2 Apr. 2020.

184 Ibid,.

disability is projected as the single most powerful utterance in the text that resists being assimilated into the hegemonic "thematic and narrative vectors" (41). Instead of construing the wordless ineffability of the images as a sign of "aesthetic nervousness", this image of disability should be understood as exposing its immense aesthetic power, where it gains its own materiality and individuality outside the domain of words.

Beckett's Corporeal Images and their Aesthetic Power

This section will examine the imagistic configurations of impaired bodies and embodied devices like wheelchairs and sticks in the play *Rough for Theatre I (*1976) in which both the disabled protagonists A and B – the former a blind man and the latter a leg amputee – deploy their tools towards violent, defensive and collaborative ends in order to create a failed alliance of mutual comfort. This process is one of violent struggle, evoking an image where the two impaired bodies refuse to become mingled into one another as each other's "prosthesis" in the formation of a "pseudo couple"[185]. Instead, their physical impediments bring forth recurring void/s which, notwithstanding their best and repeated attempts, remain elusive and ungraspable. There is an instance in the play where A discovers the absence of B's leg:

> A: [*A fumbles in the rug*.] Have you only one leg?
> B: Just the one.
> A: And the other ?
> B: It went bad and was removed.
> [*A tucks in the foot*]
> A: Will that do? (231)

This extract offers a compelling image of two different infirmities refusing confluence and a collective expression of disability. A's fumbling in the rug and not finding the leg gives way to a "short-circuiting" of the expectations of wholeness, where the part that is missing becomes a chasm that cannot be navigated; it will always remain untouched and un-held. This revelation of disfigurement is significant because it puts forth an image of disability that, having escaped the dominant corpus of articulation in memory, words, names and logic, brings attention to its aesthetic

185 "Beckett's own term to describe Mercier and Camier in *The Unnamable"* (119*).* Anderton, Joseph. *Beckett's Creatures: Art of Failure after the Holocaust.* 1st ed. 2016. Web.

power that lies in compelling readers and audiences alike to participate in acts of "absorption"[186] and "discrimination"[187]. Here, the former stands for identifying 'the power of disabilities and impairments to rivet the attention of the beholder' (127), while the latter comprises 'theorizing [those] images of bodily difference' (127) in a way that acknowledges that "disabilities" is not a collective construct and that impairments are individual, diverse and non-assimilable.

Tobin Seibers's categories of absorption and discrimination are fundamental in fully appreciating Beckett's portrayal of disabilities. He postulates "absorption" as a phenomenon whereby a given image (especially a painting) abandons its purely visual appeal and/or theatricality to speak its own language to gain a materiality that is beyond its original genre. According to Seibers, the images and words that escape their generic textual fabric are those of bodily differences because these resist being subsumed into the smooth surface of sameness. By gesturing to their difference, they summon readers / spectators to engage with them separately and absorb them at a visceral level – 'it is as if the body rises to the surface of the page and moves into the emotional consciousness of the readers' (125)[188]. This is evident in the above cited interaction between A and B, their bodies persistently beckoning to the details of their difference and thereby defying assimilation. A's haptic exploration of B's body not only exposes the ruptured surface of the latter by revealing a difference, but also brings into focus the significance of each telling detail. As Seibers aptly remarks, 'for words to rise at the surface and stare back at the readers…they must acquire the status of the detail, and where there are details, human difference is not far away' (125)[189].

In Beckett's drama, absorption in differences and details stimulates the process of discrimination, where images of material differences trigger readers' imaginations. This is in sharp contradistinction to Quayson's claim that any confrontation with disability and discomfort in Beckett's works evokes a "hermeneutical impasse" and "aesthetic nervousness" that create deliberate silence over a "tragic insight". But what seems more evident is that the lack of enunciation evoked by bodily differences compels readers to register that bodily differences do not translate into a collective voice. This is precisely what discrimination is, the assumption that disability is a collective; its repudiation as such enables readers to acknowledge that no two differences are alike, and that disability can never be encapsulated or expressed through a hegemonic universalizing rhetoric that clumps every difference under a single articulation. Thus, what Quayson deems to be an inarticulate "hermeneutical impasse",

186 Siebers, Tobin. *Disability Aesthetics*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: U of Michigan, 2010. Print.

187 Ibid,.

188 Ibid,.

189 Ibid,.

might instead be seen as an act of discrimination on the part of the dramatist, who ascribes to each and every bodily difference its own aesthetic power and individuality, not only resisting incorporation into the vectors of sameness, but not even allowing its difference to be diminished in the very fabric of differences themselves. This attention to detail extends into the domain of things as well, where we witness the two protagonists wielding their specific tools and possessions. The opening scene is suffused with a scarce yet optimal amount of things that both A and B need to survive: the former possesses a sitting stool, a fiddle and its upended case, and an alms bowl; the latter has his wheelchair that is propelled by a pole in his hand and a rug to cover his leg. The intriguing facet of this limited inventory of articles is that it aligns with the corporeality of their owners and that most action in the play is impelled by their sustained use. For B, his wheelchair is like his "lair", his only space of inhabitance; whereas for A, his fiddle and alms bowl are indispensable appendages that he cannot leave behind:

> A: I can't go without my things.
> B: What good are they to you?
> A: None.
> B: And you can't go without them?
> A: No. [*He starts groping again, halts*.] I'll find them in the end. [*Pause*] Or leave them forever behind me. [*He starts groping again*.] (230)

A's inextricability from his belongings resonates with that of Winnie in *Happy Days*, with the difference that he has no cognizant use of them. Things are an indispensable part of his being since their positionality determines the direction and point of reference of his movement in space – at times it is towards the alms bowl, fiddle and B's wheelchair and, at others, away from them: 'He gets up, puts down fiddle and bowl on the stool and gropes towards B' (230), 'A lays hold of the chair and starts pushing it blindly' (230), 'A lets go the chair, recoils. Pause. A gropes towards his stool, halts, lost' (230). This also corresponds with B's relationship with his wheelchair which functions as a receptacle for his body – 'I sit there, in my lair, in my chair, in the dark, twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four' (229) – and the only vehicle through which he traverses the vacant space of the proximate world:

> B: Only one problem: the about-turn. I often felt, as I struggled, that it would be quicker to go on, right round the world. Till the day I realized I could go home backwards. [*Pause.*] For example, I am at A. [*He pushes himself forward a little,*

> *halts.*] I push on to B. [*He pushes himself back a little, halts*.] And I return to A. [*With élan.]* The straight line! The vacant space! (228)

The entire emotive and locomotive landscape of the play hinges around the spatial configuration of objects, and upon how these characters manipulate and exploit each other by harnessing the defensive and offensive power of things. The action sequence of the play is riddled with A and B perpetually poking, prodding, pricking, pushing, pulling and hitting each other with their things. Analogous to *Happy Days*, here things and objects are the only conduits of touch between the protagonists; however, unlike Winnie and Willie, A and B constitute a violent mode of physical contact. This is apparent in B's constant striking and hitting of A with his pole:

> A: *[Pushing the chair.]* It's a gift! A gift!
> B: Stop! *[He strikes behind him with the pole. A lets go the chair, recoils. Pause. A gropes towards his stool, halts, lost.]* Forgive me! *[Pause.]* Forgive me, Billy!
> A: Where am I? *[Pause.]* Where was I? (230)

This exchange is crucial in navigating the incompatible and non-collaborative individuality of Beckett's characters who are unable to stay together despite their best efforts. This corresponds with the final image of the play where both A and B remain detached from and hostile to each other, thereby thwarting the prospect of the alliance of a blind man with a cripple and stunting the mutual reciprocity they were perpetually trying to achieve:

> A: [*Imploring*] Will you not be still?
> B: No! [*A takes his head in his hands*.] I can see *[the fiddle]* clearly, over there on the stool. [*Pause.*] What if I took it Billy and made off with it? [*Pause*.] Eh Billy, what would you say to that? [*Paus*e.] there might be another man some day would come out of his hole and find you playing the mouth organ, and you would tell him of the little fiddle you once had. [*Pause*.] Eh Billy? *[Pause.]* or singing. *[Pause.]* Eh Billy, what would you say to that? [*Pause*.] There croaking to the winter wind [*rime with unkind*], having lost his mouth organ. [*he pokes him back with the pole]* eh Billy? [*A whirls round, seizes, the end of the pole and wrenches it from B's grasp.] (233)*

This sequence is poignant since it is A's ultimate defense against B's threats of tyranny and control; it is a gesture of defiance that reveals two disparate images of bodily differences, each resisting its dissolution not only into the textual structure but also into each other. Such a depiction unearths and disputes several misguided claims about disabilities, one of them being that people with disabilities are docile, defenseless and malleable. It cannot be overlooked that Beckett's impaired characters are always defiant; they never succumb to societal norms and blatantly 'expose their variability to the impossible conformity of standardized functionalities, capacities and appearances' (Mitchell and Snyder 49)[190]. This also throws light on Beckett's ethical stance towards disabilities, which alludes to establishing disability as an unstable and unfixed construct, thereby echoing Mitchell and Snyder's position that allows disability 'to reference a state of being without a coherent collective of affective experience' (49).[191] The unfixity and incoherence in the articulation of disability, both reveals and rectifies the "heuristic gaps" and "epistemic injustice" entrenched in the outlook of normative society.

Heuristic gaps pertain to the absence of adequate heuristic tools that facilitate an informed understanding of disabilities. Contemporary discourses on disability have stacked a diversity of physical, physiological and psychological disabilities under a single homogenizing category. While it is true that "disabilities" is an umbrella term which covers a range of bodily impairments, it is nonetheless misleading to denote every bodily ailment and discomfort as a manifestation of a generalized condition of "disability". Another consequence of this standardization is that it obfuscates a nuanced knowledge of individual disabilities because all human vulnerabilities and infirmities are made to seem alike and therefore barely recognizable from one another. Thus, making disability into an incoherent and unfixed construct may not only unearth social biases and misinformation but might also eradicate "epistemic injustice" by fostering a multiplicity of expressions where experiences of the disabled will be heard distinctly and discreetly, thereby avoiding the pitfalls of standardization.

3.4 "Heuristic Gaps" and "Epistemic Injustice" in *Endgame*

A poignant manifestation of this can be traced in the play *Endgame* (1958) where Beckett stages or delineates four disabled characters – the blind and immobile Hamm in a wheelchair, the limping Clov, and the legless Nagg and Nell, both in separate ashbins. The setting of the play is a small, sparse space comprising a ladder, an armchair on castors and two bins, where navigation is consequently restricted

190 Mitchell David, Snyder Sharon, "Minority Model: From liberal to neoliberal futures of disability", *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*. ed by Watson, Nick, and Vehmas, Simo. Second ed. 2020. Print.

191ibid,.

and limited, but despite that *Endgame* is a highly motion-oriented play. This is manifest right from the opening scene where Clov carefully surveys the entire space:

> *CLOV goes and stands under the window left. Stiff, staggering walk. He looks up to the window left. He turns and looks at window right. He goes and stands under window right…He goes out and comes back immediately with a small step ladder, carries it over and steps it down under window left, gets up on it and draws curtain back, he gets down takes six steps [for example] towards window right, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window right, gets up on it and draws back curtain. He gets down, takes three steps towards window left, goes back for ladder, carries it over and steps it down under window left, gets up on it and looks out of the window. Brief laugh…He raises one lid, stoops and looks into bin. Brief laugh. He closes lid same with other bin. He goes to* HAMM…CLOV *looks him over. Brief laugh. He goes to door, halts, turns towards auditorium.* (92)

Clov's measured footsteps and staggering gait convey his hyper-reflexive disconnection from the body and its movement, coupled with the combinatorial and repetitive dimensions of motion which also resonate with the stylistic qualities in Beckett's novels. However, there is a crucial difference between how motion and hyper-reflexivity are conveyed in drama and how this contrasts starkly with their representation in the novels. The precise difference lies in the non-descriptive and non-linguistic attributes of dramatic representation. It brings forth the primal performative and gestural orientation of the body that is devoid of linguistic trajectories where 'the body itself has no language, since language is something foreign to its non-linguistic materiality. It must be spoken for if its meanings are to prove narratable' (Mitchell and Snyder 26)[192].

In the novels, the protagonists (for example, Watt, Molloy, Malone) describe or have described for themselves their physical deterioration in strictly linguistic terms. In theatre, however, Beckett charts out the non-linguistic text of the body by way of embodied performance in space. Unlike the novels, where the mutability of materiality is explored within the narrative, in drama/theatre, the fluctuating body builds its own narrative, 'producing in the body of the text the text as body' (Gontarski 174)[193] to add poignancy of expression despite the sparseness of language. This is evident in the above cited quotation: Clov does not speak a word but simply limps around the room investigating its contents.

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192 Mitchell, David T., and Snyder, Sharon L. *Narrative Prosthesis : Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse.* Michigan: Ann Arbor, U of Michigan, 2000. Print.

193 Gontarski, S. E. "The Body in the Body of Beckett's Theater." *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* 11.1 (2001): 167-77. Web.

The acts of peeping out of the window and in the bins, of methodically dragging the ladder and emanating short bursts of laughter, impart an irrefutable absurdity to the ambience and allow the overwhelming discomfort of this scene to culminate at the point where he looks at the audience, as if to bring their attention to his presence. This is another instance of "absorption" where the image stands out and compels the readers to pay attention to it and what is to unfold.

Endgame is replete with unassimilable bodies and their irreconcilable differences fracturing and confuting the progression of the narrative as they fail to co-adjust with each other. There are instances in the play where Clov and Hamm communicate about the state of their bodies but this soon dwindles, without, however, transforming into a detailed collaborative discussion:

> HAMM: How are your eyes?
>
> CLOV: Bad.
>
> HAMM: How are your legs?
>
> CLOV: Bad
>
> HAMM : But you can move.
>
> CLOV: Yes.
>
> HAMM: *[Violently*] Then move *[CLOV goes to the wall and leans against it with his forehead and hands.]* (95)

Hamm's interrogation is met by Clov's blunt answers. The state of the latter's declining body is barely touched upon and never fully enunciated. Beckett makes his characters increasingly cognizant of their material conditions, but this seldom goes beyond them enlisting their ailments in an inventory like fashion. This has been construed by some critics as reflective of a painful reminder of existence, being and mortality, while others have looked at this as a perpetual activity on the part of his characters to check whether or not they still exist and grapple with the unending and agonising problem of "thereness" [194] . Departing from these interpretations – that subsume the physical discomforts under

194 For more on Beckett's use of inventory from a phenomenological, philosophical and literary perspective refer to:

Chabert, Pierre. "The Body in Beckett's Theatre". *Journal of Beckett Studie, Volume 5 Issue* 8, Page 23-28.

Gray, Katherine. " Troubling the Body: Toward a Theory of Beckett's Use of the Human Body Onstage". *Journal of Beckett Studies*, Volume 5 Issue 1-2, Page 1-17.

Hubert, Marie–Claude. " The Evolution of the body in Beckett's Theatre." *Journal of Beckett Studies*, Volume 4 Issue 1, Page 55-66.

Wall, John."Murphy, Belacqua, Schopenhauer, and Descartes: Metaphysical Reflections on the Body." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 9.2 (2000): 21-61. Web.

philosophical interpretations – Quayson views these cursory references to declining health and physicality as emblematic of "aesthetic nervousness", so that critics are seen to wilfully disregard 'Beckettian disabled bodies in their specific phenomenological materiality' (55) by making an 'almost subliminal move *away* from accounting for the *reality* and discomfort of the body as such' toward existentialist readings of meaninglessness and stasis. Quayson extends this critique to Beckett himself, whose reservations about furnishing more biological and biographical detail (especially the absenting of pain) signifies an impermeable membrane of silence which not only obliterates a fuller expression of the body's physical deterioration but as a consequence positions debilitation and disability as modes of "tragic insight" which is best not spoken about. Quayson's assessment is pertinent to the current discussion, especially given his argument that Beckett deploys disability to create an "hermeneutical impasse", which, by its very inarticulateness, perpetuates the primary discursive elements of Beckett's art – aporia and uncertainty. In so claiming, Quayson positions Beckett as a writer who uses disability as a trope to meet specific literary ends.

Beckett and the Non-linguistic Performance of Embodied Difference

A thorough analysis of Beckett's engagement with disabled characters highlights how they are often bereft of a biographical repertoire constituting the "when" and "how" of their impairments. This, however, is not a consequence of simply fulfilling a poetic purpose, and/or to thwart the validity of a disabled body's biology, but instead serves to question the very practise of anticipating and demanding a story of origin, either congenital or otherwise, from people with disabilities. This is a normative assumption of typically bodied individuals to seek and look for a rational and convincing narrative behind the question of why another embodiment is not like theirs; and why it is unlike the "normal" majority. While it is evident that narrativizing is the primary occupation of most of Beckett protagonists, none of them concocts a story documenting the nascence of theirs or another's impairment/s. In setting things up this way, Beckett establishes the emergence and onset of disabilities as a most natural biological occurrence, analogous to birthing and ageing. Here, the ethical standpoint lies in positioning typical and atypical bodies adjacent to each other where neither of the two have a particularly tragic or privileged biographical account to offer.

A point of contradiction arising from Quayson's evaluation is his assertion that these characters do not reflect on their physical discomforts and these are therefore left unarticulated. It is evident,

however, in the novels, how his characters give a description of their physicality even when it is rapidly progressing towards immobility. We see a similar occurrence in the plays, with the distinction that instead of enunciating detailed reports of their embodied states, Beckett's dramatic characters project them through embodied performance and liminal linguistic expression, making the plays more visually evocative. This is conspicuous in *Endgame* in this verbal exchange between Hamm, Nagg and Clov:

> NAGG: I want me pap!
>
> HAMM: Give him a biscuit. [*Exit Clov.*] Accursed fornicator! How are our stumps?
>
> NAGG: Never mind me stumps.
>
> [*Enter CLOV with biscuit*.]
>
> CLOV: I'm back again, with the biscuit.
>
> *[He gives the biscuit to NAGG who fingers it, sniffs it.]*
>
> NAGG: [Plaintively] What is it?
>
> CLOV: Spratt's medium.
>
> NAGG: *[As before]* It's hard! I can't!
>
> HAMM: Bottle him!
>
> *[CLOV Pushes NAGG back into the bin, closes the lid]*
>
> CLOV: *[Returning to his place beside the chair.]* If age but knew.
>
> HAMM: Sit on him!
>
> CLOV: I can't sit.
>
> HAMM: True. And I can't stand.
>
> CLOV: So it is.

HAMM: Everyman his speciality. (97)

The dialogues, both sparse and terse, are concentrated around the limitations, needs and discomforts of the body. The brief conversation is punctuated by Clov's staggering gait, Nagg's fiddling with the biscuit and eventually being bottled up, and Hamm's armchair-bound stasis. This brings to the fore a deeply embodied narrative, where details of disfigurement and physical limitations perpetually "short-circuit" the progression of the text, thereby beckoning readers' and audience's attention towards themselves. The scene sketches an array of bodies, where 'everyman [appears with] his speciality' forming three distinct and clashing material images of disability, each carving out its individual character in performance and expression. By making disability the defining feature of the main and ancillary characters, *Endgame*, as Patrick Bixby comments, 'underscores precisely those elements…that Quayson's argument identifies as absented or occluded: the ethical difficulties of giving witness to suffering, the issues of etiology and visibility, the problems of disentangling compassion and oppression, the matters of valuing and regulating the body' (117)[195]. This can be instantiated by probing further into the particulars of the three corporealities – Hamm's immobility and blindness is juxtaposed and complimented by Clov's restless limping, and inability to sit; this uncanny dynamic is accentuated by the absence of Nagg's legs, thereby obliterating his ability to both sit and stand. Notwithstanding these apparent limitations, Nagg's kinetic abilities are not entirely sabotaged, for he brandishes his hands not only to beckon Hamm, Clov, Nell towards himself, but also to summon readers and audiences to bear witness to each of them.

Things supplement this act of witnessing physical impairments and ailments by virtue of bringing attention to and magnifying the sense of embodied discomfiture. The presence of bins and the two protruding heads and hands are uncanny reminders of the presence of Nagg and Nell, whose ruptured bodies still move and demand to be fed. Akin to Hamm and Clov, we too are not allowed to overlook and forget the ageing, legless, sightless and hearing impaired "accursed progenitors" of Hamm, irrespective of the number of times and how securely Clov lids their bins. This resonates with the movements and frozen tableaus of the leading pseudo-couple – Hamm and Clov – which Beckett dextrously stages in accompaniment of Hamm's armchair, whistle and frequent references to his medical aids and painkillers:

195 Bixby, Patrick. "'this… This… Thing': The Endgame Project, Corporeal Difference, and the Ethics of Witnessing." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 27.1 (2018): 112-27. Web.

HAMM: Screw down the lids, [*CLOV goes towards door.]* Time enough, [*CLOV halts*.] My anger subsides, I'd like to pee.

CLOV: *[With alacrity*.] I'll go and get the catheter.

[He goes towards the door.]

HAMM: Time enough, [*CLOV halts.*] Give me my pain-killer.

CLOV: It's too soon. *[Pause.]* It's too soon on top of your tonic, it wouldn't act. (103-4)

It is intriguing to note that this exchange is preceded by Hamm's whistling at Clov to check Nell's pulse, which has fortuitously come to a standstill. As evident from the extract, the sequence that follows demonstrates the continuation of Beckett's acute awareness of matters concerning the body: this includes Hamm's inability to micturate without taking recourse to a catheter, and of his incessant and unexplained pain. In contradiction to creating a hermeneutical impasse, this brief interaction amplifies the gravity of Hamm's physical limitations and delineates the ways through which he mitigates the severity of his condition by using the catheter. The scarcity of linguistic density in this dialogue is superseded by rigorous physical performance and allusions to material things which yet again serve to bring to the fore the text of the body within 'the body of the text'. In *Endgame,* Beckett incorporates a crucial nuance to the portrayal of embodied objects, which is that these objects are dysfunctional and require strenuous efforts to operate – an occurrence further exacerbated by the already failing and limited embodiments of the two protagonists. Hamm's stiff armchair is a glaring illustration of this facet, the movement of the chair is only facilitated when Clov vigorously pushes it across the stage, while it remains completely immobile when Hamm attempts to move it with a gaff:

[Enter CLOV with gaff.]

CLOV: Here's your gaff. Stick it up.

[He gives the gaff to HAMM who, wielding it like a punt-pole, tries to move his chair.]

HAMM: Did I move?

CLOV: No.

[HAMM throws down the gaff.]

HAMM: Go and get the oilcan.

CLOV: What for?

HAMM: To oil the castors.

CLOV: I oiled them yesterday. (113)

Contra to the plays analysed earlier, in *Endgame* things and bodies fail in simultaneity. Moreover, it is worth reflecting that instead of dissipating Hamm's motionlessness into the concept of aesthetic nervousness, the immobility of the armchair serves to inflate it and give it precision. The melange of scattered, sparse verbalizations, deteriorating objects and declining bodies, conjures up a narrative that is continually impeded by clashing disfigurements giving way to failure that is at once linguistic and embodied. *Endgam*e is therefore striated with a failure of expression which, unlike the *Trilogy,* however, is not expressed through negation; rather this failure to articulate is tantamount to Beckett's 'poetics of syntactical parsimony' (Abbot 87)[196]. Here 'the exquisite lessness of Beckett's syntax is a moreness of sensation as he pursues his project of driving language ever "worstward," seeking at every turn to "fail better"' (90)[197]. This is illustrated when Hamm struggles to find the appropriate conclusive word to describe or name the sensation/feeling:

HAMM: Have you not had enough?

CLOV: Yes! *(Pause.)* Of what?

HAMM: Of this. . . this. . . thing. (107)

Hamm's frustrated effort to name the thing signifies a hyper-reflexive orientation, where 'Beckett is not playing with his readers but keeping [them] from premature closure, from settling on meaning when meaning can only be approached, not arrived at' (88)[198]. Thus, the decisive intent and end here is to fail, because it is this failure to name, to point, to find, to conform, to express, that guides the

196 Abbott, H. Porter., and Project Muse. *Real Mysteries : Narrative and the Unknowable*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2013. Web.

197 Ibid,.

198 Ibid,.

trajectory of corporeal images in the play. It is only through failure that one can discern the ethical framework that underscores the noncomplying, recalcitrant and inexpressive bodies.

There is a short piece of punctured and ruptured dialogue between Nagg and Nell which circles around their progressing sight-loss and the gradual onset of hearing disorder. This conversation is wrought with repetitions, disagreements and miscommunication, but each time a fragmentation occurs, the reader is compelled to stop and reflect, and thereby absorb the image of impairments that keep extruding out of its textual fabric in distinct and unstable forms:

> [*They turn painfully towards each other*.]
>
> NAGG: Can you see me?
>
> NELL: Hardly. And you?
>
> NAGG: What?
>
> NELL: Can you see me?
>
> NAGG: Hardly.
>
> NELL: So much the better [*Pause*] so much the better.
>
> NAGG: Don't say that. [*Pause*] Our sight has failed.
>
> [*Pause. They turn away from each other*]
>
> NAGG: Can you hear me?
>
> NELL: Yes and you?
>
> NAGG: Yes [*Pause*] Our hearing hasn't failed.
>
> NELL: Our what?
>
> NAGG: Our hearing. (99)

The fragmentation that pervades the conversation has been identified by Quayson as a "hermeneutical impasse" where the aetiology of an impairment is never expressed, which thus makes interpretive

activity impossible. A counter argument to Quayson's claim is that impairments, while having a specific site of origin, may be devoid of a reliable genesis. As evinced by the aforementioned quotation, Nell and Nagg are completely cognizant of their blindness and their decaying materiality but they do not provide an encompassing narrative and that is because there might not always be a story available detailing the genesis of sight loss. The gradual failure of the body is simply a natural occurrence owing to which it remains excluded from being chronicled.

Another discernible characteristic of failure in Beckett's drama is its "stiff inter-exclusiveness"[199] with other embodiments, which, as Brater aptly remarks, creates a "hermetic remaking"[200] of embodied experiences and speech. This is best exemplified in Nell and Nagg's painful effort to face each other and have a conversation, but in what ensues, they soon acknowledge that their sight has failed, which creates an unbridgeable chasm between the two, where they accept that bridging the gap is now impossible. The alienation and detachment ("stiff inter-exclusiveness") that erupts from this confrontation is not verbally expressed in notes of consternation; it is performed in their abruptly and briskly turning away from each other. Although the dialogue continues, it is nothing more than repetitive declarations and questions that eventually fizzle out. In the end, what readers and audiences have before them are two distinct images of disabilities exploding out of the text, that not only compel them as onlookers to "absorb" (pay attention to) them but also to "discriminate" and acknowledge their individuality and exclusiveness from each other. This gestures to an ethical reading and viewing of disability, which unlike "aesthetic nervousness" is not intended to create a "hermeneutical impasse," but is an effort to herald a "hermetic remaking" of disabilities and impairments as individual, non-assimilable and uncategorizable.

Negation and the "Hermetic Remaking" of Disabilities

Beckett cleverly interpolates the "hermetic remaking" of ethics and disability by establishing failure as a universal condition. This is vividly portrayed by Clov and Hamm; their detached and strained interactions perpetually "short-circuit" the semantic structure of the text. They too, like Nagg and Nell, stand apart and adjacent to each other, demonstrating a hermetic non-permeability on one side but also

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199 Enoch Brater has defined "stiff inter-exclusiveness" in Becketts's textual structure as an independence of voice to the speech; independence of mouth to embodiment; and an integral incoherence between inter textual allusions, and sentence constructions. According to Brater lends Beckett's texts a hermetic dimension where sense and similarity cannot be deduced. Enoch. *Beyond Minimalism : Beckett's Late Style in the Theater*. New York: OUP, 1987. Print.

" ". *The Drama in the Text : Beckett's Late Fiction*. New York ; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994. Print.

Brater, Enoch. "The Globalization of Beckett's Godot." *Comparative Drama* 37.2 (2003): 145-58. Morris Beja, S. E Gontarski, and Pierre Astler, EDS. *Samuel Beckett: Humanistic Perspectives*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press 1983. Print.

200 Brater studies "hermetic remaking" in light of textual and discursive elements in Beckett's texts where allusions to Joyce and Dante remain excusive to the narrative.

proximity on the other. It can be exemplified by the fact that Clov does not leave Hamm, almost in spite of himself:

> CLOV: There's one thing I'll never understand. *(He gets down.)* Why I always obey you. Can you explain that to me?
>
> HAMM: No. . . Perhaps it's compassion. *(Pause.)* A kind of great compassion. *(Pause.)* Oh you won't find it easy, you won't find it easy. (84)

The "compassion" that Hamm speaks about is not an aftermath of pity, fear and helplessness on Clov's part, or an existential stasis where one cannot choose to get away. It is in fact Beckett's masterful delineation of an acknowledgement of human unity that persists only in the recognition of mutual vulnerability, failure and compassion. Clov and Hamm, in this very "short-circuiting" and perpetual recalcitrance actually recognise their own finitude and limitation, echoing 'Heidegger's affirmation that human beings only recognize the essence of human existence by confronting their "radical finitude"' [201]. In *Endgame*, Beckett affirms the picture of "radical finitude" not by 'comparing and constructing images of the normal and the abnormal' (Bixby 123)[202], but by abolishing these conditions to make finitude and failure the new norm, so poignantly articulated by Hamm:

> HAMM: (*With prophetic relish.)* One day you'll be blind like me. You'll be sitting here, a speck in the void, in the dark, forever, like me. *(Pause.)* One day you'll say to yourself, I'm tired, I'll sit down, and you'll go and sit down. Then you'll say, I'm hungry, I'll get up and get something to eat. But you won't get up. You'll say, I shouldn't have sat down, but since I have I'll sit on a little longer, then I'll get up and get something to eat. But you won't get up and you won't get anything to eat...Yes, one day you'll know what it is, you'll be like me, except that you won't have anyone with you, because you won't have had pity on anyone and because there won't be anyone left to have pity on you.
>
> CLOV: It is not certain. *[Pause].* And there is one thing you forget.
>
> HAMM: Ah?

201 Siebers, Tobin (2010b), 'In the Name of Pain', in Jonathan M. Metzl and Anna Kirkland (eds.), *Against Health: How Health became the New Morality*, New York: New York University Press, pp. 183–94.

202 Bixby, Patrick. "'this… This… Thing': The Endgame Project, Corporeal Difference, and the Ethics of Witnessing." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 27.1 (2018): 112-27. Web.

CLOV: I can't sit down (109)

Negation is a hallmark of Beckett's poetics; thus, it is hardly surprising to see Hamm's affirmation being swiftly undercut by the bare assertion of the bodily reality of Clov. An analysis of this constant cycle of affirmation and negation brings to the fore its indispensability because it upholds the "stiff inter-exclusiveness" between these characters and in so doing allows each of them to shape their specific corporeal phenomenality, thereby fostering a "hermetic remaking" of their experiences. Clov is neither repudiating his inability to sit, nor anticipating that it might correct itself, but rather he is establishing that his experience of living in and with his body will be starkly distinguished from Hamm's own. His countering of Hamm therefore resonates with his resistance to the homogenisation of his and Hamm's corporeal experiences.

It must be taken into account that Beckett, through the characters of Nell, Nagg, Hamm, and Clov, does not simply blur the boundaries between abled and disabled; rather, he propagates a nuanced understanding of diverse impairments, thereby thwarting any standardisation of disability within some generalised self-referential category. Critics have construed *Endgame* as a text that answers and adheres to 'an important axiom for disability studies: that if we live long enough, we will all become disabled' (124)[203]. The reading here challenges this claim and suggests that Beckett's dramatic work, instead of endorsing 'disability as a new norm' (117),[204] ascertains failure as a norm and establishes it as an organic and integral condition of human existence, be it abled or disabled. The hazard of pinning disability to senescence is that both categories come to be demonised and shunned as ineluctable conditions of mortality. This promulgates a helpless and hopeless narrative where longevity will hardly be distinguishable from disability. On the other hand, instantiating Beckett's aesthetics and ethics of failure as an immanent condition of embodied experience not only helps to sustain the overlap that exists between abled and disabled bodies but also serves to maintain the two constructs as equally distinct and individual, because every experience of failure shall manifest itself as "inter-exclusive" demanding our "hermetic" revaluation of them.

The Hermetics of Failure in Beckett's Disabled and Non-Disabled Characters

To evaluate the presence of failure in both abled and disabled perspectives, it is pertinent to see how the two are delineated in positions of adjacency to each other. Beckett's celebrated play *Waiting for Godot* is exemplary in revealing the intricacies of failure, things and embodiment, as they appear in

203Ibid,.

204 Ibid,.

the non-disabled though increasingly afflicted protagonists, Vladimir and Estragon, and in the explicitly disabled auxiliary characters Pozzo and Lucky (the former becomes blind in the second act, and the latter becomes deaf and mute). It is striking to note that even the abled protagonists of the play suffer from excruciating pain and tottering gait, in conjunction with a severe lack of sustained control over their balance and bodily functions. Even the object world of *WfG* lends no respite to these falling and hobbling characters who perpetually turn to things like their hat and boots, under a compulsion to extract an unspoken, unformed, unspecified and ultimately an unachieved signification from them. In synchrony with the plays discussed so far, *WfG* commences with an active entanglement with things manifest in Estragon's and Vladimir's hat and boot duets. The former, '*with supreme effort succeeds in pulling off his boot, he looks inside it, feels about inside it, turns it upside down, shakes it, looks on the ground to see if anything has fallen out, finds nothing, feels inside it again, staring sightlessly before him*' (12), while the latter persistently peers into his hat, *'knocks on the crown as though to dislodge a foreign body…and puts it on again'* (12). Beckett called this the 'hat and boot analogy' where each character is seen 'scratching around their respective sources of irritation'[205] and claiming their respective objects of immersion. These gestures bear immense theatrical value, for they are emblematic of the extreme state of destitution in which the tramps find themselves. Here objects are not so much valued for their functional utility, but as Vladimir and Estragon's only means to find that unnameable thing of value which is so pressingly non-existent in their life. The entire ethos of the play is founded upon the waiting, anticipation and exploration of that missing yet crucial link of existence. However, instead of enunciating this in verbose philosophical terminologies, Beckett projects it in an embodied and hyper-reflexive manner of articulations.

In *WfG* the act of waiting is itself presented in strictly somatic terms, in which the tramps limp, stagger and hop their way into eternal waiting. In the opening scene readers/audiences are acquainted with Vladimir who is '*advancing [towards Estragon] with short stiff strides, legs wide apart*' (11). Right from the outset, Beckett blurs the demarcation between a smooth gait and one that is characteristically disturbed. This is amplified when after a brief exchange of dialogues between the two tramps, Estragon begins to stand and pace across the stage

> *[[ESTRAGON] rises painfully, goes limping to extreme left, halts, gazes into distance off with his hand screening his eyes, turns, goes to extreme right, gazes into distance. Vladimir watches him, then goes and picks up the boot, peers into it, drops it hastily*.]

205 Taylor-Batty, Mark, and Taylor-Batty, Juliette. *Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot.* London: Continuum, 2008. Print.

VLADIMIR: Pah! He spits. [*Estragon moves to center, halts with his back to auditorium.]*

ESTRAGON: Charming spot. [*He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium*.] Inspiring prospects. [*He turns to Vladimir*.] Let's go.

VLADIMIR: We can't.

ESTRAGON: Why not?

VLADIMIR: We're waiting for Godot. (15)

In the excerpt above the directionality of Estragon's marching in juxtaposition with his vantage point implicates readers and audience in the visceral experience of waiting that imparts a sense of immediacy and indeterminacy to the play. This is reflected in Brater's observation that 'direction of movement on Beckett's stage depends not necessarily on east, west, north or south, left or right (or their opposites from where we sit, stage left or stage right), but on the particular vantage point from which "it all" is being perceived' (61)[206]. This remark is pertinent in gauging the visual impact of Beckett's drama and the aesthetics it unfolds. Estragon's turns, halts and gazes have a two-fold purpose: first, to unfold the inherent "depotentialized" structure of the space; secondly, to bring to the fore the poignant "frozen tableaux" of the play, which makes the endless anticipation of the arrival of Godot a hyper-reflexive activity, in that readers/ audiences are equally immersed in the prolonged waiting. Thus, the halts and pauses are mere reminders that "it all" is not yet over.

Deleuze defines potentiality of space as a "double possibility": 'it is the possibility that an event that is itself possible is realized in the space under consideration. The possibility that something realizes itself and the possibility that some place realizes it' (13)[207]. The space/setting of *Godot* perpetually thwarts both these spatial potentialities, in turn unearthing the inevitability of failure and finitude, and its inextricable connection with the body. In the aforementioned excerpt, Estragon paces to and fro; surveys the space in its entirety (including the auditorium); expresses his fondness for it; ironically demands to leave; and is rapidly turned down by Vladimir who reminds him "we can't". This is the first instance in the play, in an endless succession of many, where space is projected as a domain that prohibits departure and an end. The only realisable occurrence in this space is waiting that is imbued with incessant activity but no outcome. Beckett aligns this dimension of failure with the non-disabled embodiments as well because, even here, pain, lethargy and agitated activity are all coupled together

206 Brater, Enoch. *Beyond Minimalism : Beckett's Late Style in the Theater*. New York: OUP, 1987. Print.

207 Deleuze, Gilles, and Anthony Uhlmann. "The Exhausted." *SubStance* 24.3 (1995): 3-28. Web.

to bring forth the universality of failure, heralding an aesthetic which Beckett called 'the themes of the body' (131)[208] where faltering, falling, failing and trying never cease. This is evident in the stage directions where '[*ESTRAGON loses balance, almost falls. He clutches the arm of VLADIMIR, who totters. They listen, huddled together…[They relax and separate*.]' (21). Analogous to Clov and Hamm (the former cannot sit, and the latter cannot stand), Beckett paints a similar complementary dynamic between Estragon and Vladimir. It is visible through their perpetuation of tired and agitated striding in a relay like fashion. That is apparent when Vladimir resumes pacing to and fro after Estragon sits and falls asleep:

> VLADIMIR: [*ESTRAGON sits down on the mound. VLADIMIR paces agitatedly to and fro, halting from time to time to gaze into the distance off. ESTRAGON falls asleep. VLADIMIR halts before ESTRAGON*.] Gogo!....Gogo!....[ESTRAGON wakes with a start.]
> ESTRAGON: [*Restored to the horror of the situation*.] I was asleep! [*Despairingly]* Why will you never let me sleep?
> VLADIMIR: I felt lonely. (17)

The significance of the stage direction is that it 'lends vitality to what might otherwise have been a somewhat static scene' (Knowlson 131)[209] and in so doing it also highlights the carefully choreographed rhythm of pacing and continuation that presides over the play as a whole – ' a 'step-by-step approach' Beckett called it' (131)[210]. Another crucial suggestion of the stage directions is the fluctuating relationship between the two protagonists which is at once antagonistic and collaborative, fittingly seen through Vladimir and Estragon's 'perpetual coming together and separation' (Brater 17)[211]. This resonates with the previously discussed[212] "pseudo couples"[213] in Beckett's drama, who each fail to forge a partnership until the end, remaining both epistemologically and ontologically

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208 Knowlson, James. *Images of Beckett*. Ed. Haynes, John: Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print

209 Ibid,.

210 Ibid,.

211 Ibid,.

"In one of his theatre notebooks prepared for the Schiller Theatre production of *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett wrote: 'establish at [the] outset 2 caged dynamics, E. [Estragon] sluggish, V. [Vladimir] restless + perpetual separation and reunion of V/E.'" Knowlson, James. *Images of Beckett*. Ed. Haynes, John: Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print.

212 A and B (*Rough for Theatre I*), Hamm and Clov, and Nell and Nagg (*Endgame*).

213 'This is what Beckett deftly characterized as the "pseudo- couple". The first pseudo couple to appear was in a novel written directly in French, *Mercier and Camier,* who are called a "pseudo couple" in *The Unnamable* , whose narrator sees two men appearing , adding : "I naturally thought of the pseudo-couple *Mercier and Camier*"' (61) "Literature and Fantasy, toward a Grammar of the Subject." *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and Psychoanalysis*, by Jean-Michel Rabaté, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014. Print.

unassimilable. Given these saliences, it seems important to examine how the "coupling" between Vladimir and Estragon, two "able-bodied" characters, diverges from that of the other impaired couples? how does it counter Davis's conception of "dis-modernism"? what does a non-disabled adaptation add to the contemporary canon of the "social model of disability"[214] and biological differences? And is Beckett also exploring and/or suggesting the exigent need for an improvised culture of care?

The partnership between Vladimir and Estragon exhibits similarities of goal, movements and embodiments, which foster the establishment of synchronization between the two: a feature that is absent in the couples discussed above and in the play itself, where Pozzo and Lucky display a violently hierarchical and exploitative rapport even after they go blind and deaf. Instead of mitigating the visible cruelty of the former towards the latter, the onset of impairment fails to trigger understanding and cooperation between the two. Things add enormously to the exploitative coupling between the two, where Lucky, the emaciated beast of burden '*carries a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket and a greatcoat*' (23), while Pozzo, his master only wields "a whip". The ensuing stage directions showcase vigorous exchange of things between the disabled duo; it is through this slapstick and repetitive sequence of compliance to commands that Beckett sketches the compelling spectacle of an abusive relationship:

> *[LUCKY gets up, gathering up his burdens.]*
> VLADIMIR: Where do you go from here?
> POZZO: On. [*LUCKY, laden down, takes his place before POZZO.]* Whip! *[LUCKY puts everything down, looks for whip, finds it, puts it into POZZO's hand, takes up everything again.]* Rope!

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214 'The critical politics of the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in the 1970s stressed the societal origin of disability, highlighting disability as the outcome of soci-etal processes and structures, cultural differences and historical change'. The politics of UPIAS led to the first and most influential definition of disability that addresses disability as a societal matter:

> In our view it is society which disables physically impaired people. Dis-ability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society.
>
> Schillmeier, Michael. *Rethinking Disability: Bodies, Senses, and Things*. Routledge, 2010. Print

> *[LUCKY puts everything down, puts end of the rope into POZZO's hand, takes up everything again.]*
> VLADIMIR: What is there in the bag?
> POZZO: Sand. *[He jerks the rope.]* On! (83)

The apposition of Lucky's gaunt body with copious objects, frantic activity and muteness serves the purpose of building an image of unredeemable burden which is only exacerbated as time passes by. Akin to Vlad's hat and Gogo's boots, deployed to etch out their frustration and agony, Lucky's burden limns the ultimate picture of acceptance and desperate survival at all costs. Another intriguing facet of Pozzo and Lucky's vaudevillian action is the step by step or gradual building up and progression of action. In this, the give-and-take of items is choreographed in a systematic manner, not a haphazard shoving of objects, as if Beckett is aiming to reflect upon the slowness and meticulous nature of this exchange. A noteworthy aspect of the dramatic image is also the hasty sequence of action and non-action executed by Lucky which, unlike in the novels, is not indicative of prolonged activity and rest, but rather more akin to the way in which static pauses, after a sprint of action indicate moments of "frozen tableaux"[215] or "the waiting points", which are an integral part in fully appreciating the image on stage and text and with that the ethos of Beckett's dramatic art. These moments of immobility evoke the readers/spectators to look at the images before them as distinct iterations, each invoking a "hermetic remaking" of itself. Here, Lucky stands away and in front of Pozzo, while Vladimir stays out of the way. The freezing or waiting position of the three characters demonstrates the lack of physical and haptic proximity between them, compelling audiences and readers to register each character in his "stiff inter-exclusiveness" with the other and his non-assimilability to a broad hegemony of shared identity.

The same scrupulous balance is also maintained at the level of dramatization of movement in which action and inaction, falling and standing, and human vulnerability and disability stand in complementary contrast with each other. It is manifest in the stage directions in which Gogo and Didi consistently fall, stand, and limp in quick succession with each other, with these actions quite often culminating in a mutual embrace between the two. This is demonstrated by the re-arrival of Pozzo in Act 2, initiated by all three intermittently falling on the ground, starting with Pozzo, and terminating with Gogo:

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215 "At these moments, the actors were frozen into immobility, sitting or standing in total silence" (133). "Beckett as Director." *Images of Beckett*. 2003. 97-147. Web.

VLADIMIR: Quick! Give me your hand!
ESTRAGON: I'm going. [*Pause. Louder.]* I'm going.
VLADIMIR: Well I suppose in the end I'll get up by myself. [*He tries, fails*.] In the fullness of time.
ESTRAGON: What's the matter with you?
VLADIMIR: Go to hell.
ESTRAGON: Are you staying there?
VLADIMIR: For the time being.
ESTRAGON: Come on, get up, you'll catch a chill.
VLADIMIR: Don't worry about me.
ESTRAGON: Come on, Didi, don't be pig-headed! [*He stretches out his hand which Vladimir makes haste to seize*].
VLADIMIR: Pull! [*Estragon pulls, stumbles, falls. Long silence.]* (76)

The gradual or "step by step" falling forms the crux of this short vaudevillian piece. This not only puts forth a "de-potentialized space" which opens up a landscape for eternal waiting, thereby foreclosing the possibility of finality, but also unlocks a domain for unlimited activity and multiple events of failure to occur. The rhythmic falling resonates with the ideas of embodied failure and vulnerability that permeate the entire thematic structure of the play. The defeated efforts of Gogo and Didi to help each other shows mutual collaboration and interdependence which, despite the initial unattainability, culminates in them eventually standing back again:

ESTRAGON: Suppose we got up to begin with?
VLADIMIR: No harm trying. [*They get up.]*
ESTRAGON: Child's play.
VLADIMIR: Simple question of will-power. (78)

This is exactly where points of contrast arise between Beckett's disabled and non-disabled pseudo-couples. The two tramps manifest that human vulnerability is a universal human experience. Their incessant movement, falling and finally cooperation in trying to stand again, as demonstrated in this instance, is resonant with a human vulnerability that diverges from disability and impairment. The only reason why Gogo and Didi embrace and help each other is that they replicate and complement each other's embodiments. In so doing they acknowledge the fragility of human embodiment even

though this suggestion remains aloof from that of reducing all human frailty to collective disability. Instead, Gogo and Didi reflect the failure of embodiment as a collective experience that will happen to all, resonating with Lucky's speech in Act 1:

> That man in brief…in spite of the strides of physical culture the practice of sports such as tennis football running cycling swimming flying floating riding gliding conating camogie skating tennis of all kinds dying flying sports of all sorts autumn summer winter winter tennis of all kinds hockey of all sorts penicillin and succedanea in a word I resume and concurrently simultaneously for reasons unknown to shrink and dwindle in spite of the tennis . (43)

The story of "the man" in Lucky's speech resonates with that of the universal state of human embodiment whose teleology is inevitably toward failure and "shrinking" and "dwindling". Irrespective of how athletic and agile one is, the body will eventually become frail. Notwithstanding the assertion that failure and falling are the norm for human trajectories of living, Beckett does not suggest giving up, but rather exhorts us to be persistent and to accept failure with humility, an idea that springs from his reading of Geulincx's philosophy, 'where the futility of physical action ("being capable of nothing") is being tied with such immediacy to an epistemological incapacity ("he knows nothing"), combined with the obligation to act anyway ("to have to try"), is a remarkably resonant point in Beckett's 'fantasia'' (134)[216]. In the aforementioned passage, we see Beckett replicating a similar idea through Lucky's speech which is punctuated by the epistemological voids highlighting his inability to reiterate why we ultimately fail despite the progress in science and our best practices to try to maintain our agility through athletic movement. This also provides an ethical perspective on the prevalent culture of "supercriping"[217] in sports which projects failure and incapacity as unacceptable human conditions that must be surpassed by sustained athletic vigour. Beckett shuns this idea in *WfG* where he puts forth a stage and textual image where the characters fall and fail but do not consider it a repugnant and/ or unanticipated outcome. This stance is useful in analysing the heuristic gaps that pervade the contemporary ethos of disability sports where the tragic presence of disability can only be overcome by victory over failure. The reason why this is a critical heuristic gap is because any evaluation of the body is incomplete without allocating a significant place to vulnerability and

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216 Tucker, David. *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx : Tracing 'a Literary Fantasia'*. Continuum International Pub., 2012.

217 'It is an athlete who with courage, hard work and dedication proves that one can accomplish the impossible and heroically triumph over the 'tragedy' of disability' (338). Watson, Nick. "Disability, Sport and Physical Activity: a Critical Review." *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*, Routledge, 2012, pp. 346–357.

failure, since these are the primal conditions of human embodiment. Expunging these categories will not only stem the propagation of a well informed and sustainable model of disability on one hand, but might, on the other, also serve to promote a misleading one that is based on the anticipation of superlative athleticism that goes far beyond the natural capacities of the body. This practise, as Brett and Sparkes rightly observe, 'implicates individuals within a new and more demanding mechanism of social control which banishes disability, impairment and illness from everyday life, and associates ill-health or an impaired body with a lack of inner individual strength and motivation' (342)[218]. Beckett's texts not only redress this fundamental oversight by positioning impaired bodies in the domain of theatre representation, but also puts them in proximity with non-disabled ones. This advances a more nuanced portrayal of different embodiments which brings the pre-eminence of impairment and embodiment back into focus, hence also providing a re-evaluation of the pitfalls of completely adopting the "social model of disability" along with offering a timely critique of Lennard's "dis-modernism" approach, both of which are perilous for an appropriate implementation of the phenomenology of disability and "disability aesthetics"[219].

The Phenomenological and Epistemic Insights into Disabilities in *WfG*

This is fittingly illustrated by the re-arrival of Pozzo and Lucky, the only two characters in Beckett's dramatic canon that portray a late onset of disability on stage. The altered state of their sensory apparatus has been understood by critics as the representation of existential crisis of isolation, ineffability and nothingness which, as Quayson accurately suggests, 'allows disability to be so easily assimilated to philosophical categories' (85)[220]. In order to bring disability back into focus and regard it as a 'crucial step towards understanding [Beckett's] complex and elusive universe' (Quayson 85)[221] one needs to look at Pozzo and Lucky's impairment as starkly literal and in that sense far removed from elusive philosophical ideas. In fact, the unforeseen commencement of blindness and dumbness epitomises multiple ideas, namely, fragility of embodiment, corporeal differences, issues of aetiology, social and cultural understanding of sensory impairments and the role of hyper-reflexivity. Pozzo's speech in response to the tramps' importunity is essential in comprehending these issues:

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218 Ibid.

219 "Disability aesthetics' is a means to 'imagine feelings, forms, and futures in radically different ways, and by which they bestow on these new feelings, forms, and futures real appearance in the world" (3).

Siebers, Tobin. Disability Aesthetics. University of Michigan Press, 2010. Print.

220 Quayson, Ato. *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation*. Columbia University Press, 2007. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/quay13902. Accessed 2 Apr. 2020.

221 Ibid.

VLADIMIR: I'm asking you if it came on you all of a sudden.
POZZO: I woke up one fine day as blind as Fortune. (*Pause.*) Sometimes I wonder if I'm not still asleep.
VLADIMIR: And when was that?
POZZO: I don't know.
VLADIMIR: But no later than yesterday—
POZZO: (*violently*). Don't question me! The blind have no notion of time. The things of time are hidden from them too. (80)

This verbal exchange unearths two sides of disabled and non-disabled epistemological domains, where the latter is imbued with unfounded assumptions about blindness in conjunction with the anticipation that there will be a detailed genesis of the former's impairments. These notions are thwarted by Pozzo whose sharp retort assails the canons of the Western tradition that assumes a priori that blindness is unquestionably supplanted and supplemented by supernatural insight into the future[222], and/or an eternal punishment inflicted by and upon the person as a consequence of a grave flaw[223]. Contra to these understandings, Pozzo 'demystifies the miraculous and ambiguous presence of [blindness]'(45)[224] because for him it is the phenomenal reality of his body that must not be layered under philosophical iterations. This also chimes with showing the perpetual possibility that anything can happen at any moment, recapitulating that impairments may not constitute an etiological account apart from the single overpowering fact that it happened "one fine day". In demystifying disability, prising it away from abstractions and narrativizations, Beckett counters the cultural given 'that people with extraordinary bodies are held responsible for them, in two senses. First, they are required to account for them, often to complete strangers; second, the expectation is that their accounts will serve to relieve their auditors' discomfort. The elicited narrative is expected to conform to, and thus confirm, a cultural script' (Couser 5)[225]. This is evident in the continued investigation of Pozzo by the tramps, each attempting to glean a sequential narrative of his, and Lucky's impairments:

VLADIMIR: What do you do when you fall far from help?

222 As exemplified by Tiresias, the blind prophet of Greek mythology.

223 Indicating the Theban legend of King Oedipus, the eponymous hero of Greek tragedy, who blinded himself as a punishment, accidentally fulfilling the prophecy of killing his father and marrying his mother. Upon discovery, he blinded himself as a punishment of his sins.

224Schillmeier, Michael. *Rethinking disability: Bodies, senses, and things*. Routledge, 2012. Print.

225 Couser, G. Thomas. *Recovering Bodies : Illness, Disability, and Life Writing*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1997. Print.

> POZZO: We wait till we can get up. Then we go on. On!
> VLADIMIR: Before you go tell him to sing.
> POZZO: Who?
> VLADIMIR: Lucky.
> POZZO: To sing?
> VLADIMIR: Yes. Or to think. Or to recite.
> POZZO: But he is dumb.
> VLADIMIR: Dumb!
> POZZO: Dumb. He can't even groan.
> VLADIMIR: Dumb! Since when?
> POZZO: (*suddenly furious*.) Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (*Calmer*.) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. (*He jerks the rope*.) On! *Exeunt Pozzo and Lucky. Vladimir follows them to the edge of the stage, looks after them. The noise of falling, reinforced by mimic of Vladimir, announces that they are down again. (83)*

As explained earlier in the chapter, the absence of a sequential narrative has been viewed by Quayson as a "hermeneutical impasse", that disrupts the proper articulation and understanding of disability. But in so claiming, Quayson overlooks that Pozzo is not only resisting the pressure to conform to a social expectation but is also equating his, and Lucky's sudden impairment to a natural occurrence that could happen to anyone at any time. His persistent agitation is directed at the tramps' enquiry, not because he wants to avoid the "tragic insight" that a discussion of his disability may impose on him but because there is no script that covers the onset of sight loss and speech loss. Pozzo's speech also beckons to the fact that impairments are a natural phenomenon of the human body and a constant possibility. The dialogue above lays bare the cultural supposition that impaired individuals are always in dire need of assistance and that if they "fall far from help", their condition will become irreparably hopeless and helpless. Pozzo's speech redresses this assumption by suggesting that under such circumstances they do not just stay still but they try instead to stand and move on. This resonates with the dimension of hyper-reflexivity which enables them to continue to go on despite the overwhelming physical limitations. It must nonetheless be taken into account that the ethical implication of hyper-reflexivity and onward movement is not directed towards sustaining a supercrip culture where people surpass

their limitations and that does not allow their disability to inhibit them. Instead it proffers a stance that espouses a proper assimilation and integration of physical limitations into one's consciousness and mode of living, where persistence, failure, falling and slowed pace are not deplorable outcomes and emblems of "aesthetic nervousness" anymore: rather, they are the images of "absorption" that by virtue of their broken surface beckon our attention to a new understanding of disability and difference that sees "failing and failing better" as a new form of aesthetic. Heralding an aesthetic practice where 'disability does not express defect, degeneration or deviancy...Rather, [it] enlarges our vision of human variation and difference' (Siebers 3)[226].

In Beckett's dramatic works, the emergence of corporeal difference reveals that human variation and vulnerability, despite being universal phenomena, are not to be commingled as one homogenised occurrence. Notwithstanding that both Pozzo and Lucky and the two tramps constantly fall, limp and grope, they never become one and alike. Here vulnerability is not interposed with disability and vice versa, and that is where lies the pertinenece of the criticism of Davis's "dis-modernism" which, although it speaks about acknowledging and accepting human difference, also ironically suggests dissolving all inherent corporeal variations by putting them under a single construct of universal disability without difference. In *WfG*, the differences between all four characters is maintained throughout: Beckett retains separation in that it is Pozzo and Lucky who are impaired, while the tramps only suffer from recurring bodily discomforts and ailments. But it must not be construed that owing to their sensory impairments both Pozzo and Lucky inhabit similarities without differences. The former's blindness is a separate and distinct condition from the latter's loss of speech, which shows that for Beckett, 'similarity [*das Selbe*] is not the undifferentiated conflation of the identical (of beings), but the relation of difference'[227] (15). Beckett thereby entrenches corporeal differences and variations at the very heart of the theatre image, one that beckons readers and audiences to "discriminate"[228], appreciate and recognise their presence not as representatives of a collective construct of disability, but as individual embodiments that insist upon their sundry differences, demarcating one impairment from another.

These images of differences are delineated mostly through the body and bodily movement whose performative expression supersedes verbal eloquence. This is evident in the closing images of the play in which Lucky and Pozzo's exit, and Vladimir and Estragon's stasis reveal a cyclical, and an unending

226 Siebers, Tobin. *Disability Aesthetics*. University of Michigan Press, 2010.

227 Schillmeier, Michael. *Rethinking Disability: Bodies, Senses, and Things.* Routledge, 2010.

228 Ibid.

pattern of failure and persistence. The former pair departs the stage the same way it entered – by falling with their burdens and desperately gathering themselves again: *'Exeunt POZZO and LUCKY… The noise of falling, reinforced by mimic of VLADIMIR, announces that they are down again*' (83). This is shortly followed by the concluding spectacle in which Vladimir yet again '*takes off his hat (Lucky's), peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it, knocks on the crown, puts it on again*'(88) and Estragon once more prods Vlad to leave, who in turn reminds him to pull on his trousers. In congruence with the outset of the play, their verbal interactions and tugging with their belongings remain untransformed. Ultimately nothing gets dislodged from the hat, and the cycle of falling, freezing, scratching, fiddling and waiting carries on:

> ESTRAGON: *[Realizing his trousers are down.]* True.
> *[He pulls up his trousers.]*
> VLADIMIR: Well? Shall we go?
> ESTRAGON: Yes, let's go.
> *[They do not move.]*(88)

In so being, we see Beckett's dramatic art as one which relies heavily on the non-verbal corporeal patterns where the exhaustive use of the body echoes Craig's idea of the *Art of Theatre* in which 'the actor…must no longer *imitate*, he must *indicate*…and use his body and voice as though they were materials rather than parts of himself' (109)[229].

The Psychophysiology of Movement in Beckett's Deployment of Sound

In Beckett's drama, materiality is configured as the dominant and central image in both text and performance. Akin to Craig's conception, Beckett's characters and actors do not use their bodies as purely mimetic tools, instead they indicate and concretise profound psychological distress and ineffable and abstract ideas through the precise gesticulation and motion of their bodies. This is evident too in the play *Footfalls,* which is based on the agitated and measured pacing of the protagonist May. The image of walking to and fro is so central to the play that the plot becomes subordinate. As Beckett himself emphasised during its production, 'the walking up and down is the central image' (60)[230], 'everything else is secondary' (256).[231] The incessant pacing around on which the whole play is built

229 Ibid,.

230 Brater, Enoch. *Beyond Minimalism : Beckett's Late Style in the Theater*. New York: OUP, 1987. Print.

231 Beckett, Samuel, and Gontarski, S. E. *On Beckett : Essays and Criticism*. 2012. Web.

is both accurate and detailed, as Beckett instructed the actress Hildegard Schmahl: 'the walking should be like a metronome; one length must be measured in exactly nine seconds' (256).[232] Thus the dominant image on stage is that of exhaustive movement which unearths some profound inner distress and unresolved conflict where motion needs to be validated by the sound it makes:

> May: I mean Mother, I must hear the feet however faint they fall. The Mother: the motion alone is not enough? May: no mother, the motion alone us not enough, I must hear the feet, however faint they fall. *[Pause. May resumes pacing. With pacing]*. (401)

The sonic and measured quality of May's pacing makes it a hyper-reflexive activity where she not only needs to be precise in the step count but also receptive to the footfalls, adding an auditory dimension to what the dramatist called 'the life-long stretches of walking'. Again, the origin and cause of May's restless pacing are never specified in the play. Instead, Beckett only projects an ineffable, aphasic and purely embodied image of extreme physical and mental agony. Notwithstanding the fact that May's misery is more psychological than somatic, it is physically demanding on the actors who play her. This can be instantiated by Billie Whitelaw's comments, in an interview with Linda Ben-zvi:

> With *Footfalls* it was physically excruciating to maintain the posture required for the part … There is nothing left. Recently in Australia, touring with *Footfalls*, I developed shin splints. I had to go everyday to get the bone put back into the marrow. (9)[233]

Whitelaw's remark is crucial in understanding the performative and embodied dimension of Beckett's dramatic art, especially in the way it concretises human suffering and vulnerability just by portraying a simple movement like walking. Unlike the characters discussed above, May's pacing is not ruptured by any explicit physical discomforts of pain and impairment so her portrayal remains within the textual elements of the play, mainly those of sound and motion. This is analogous to Brater's remark that 'partly choreographic, partly musical, *Footfalls* displays a rhythmic system in its structure that is essentially poetic' (70)[234]. *Footfalls* consolidates a poetic image on stage where sound and movement are well-integrated in the text. In so being, May's pacing projects an image that, unlike those already

232 Ibid,.

233 Ben-Zvi, Linda. *Women in Beckett : Performance and Critical Perspectives.* Urbana: U of Illinois, 1990. Print.

234 Brater, Enoch. *Beyond Minimalism : Beckett's Late Style in the Theater.* New York: OUP, 1987. Print.

discussed, does not cause textual short-circuiting, for the image is inscribed in the text, instead of standing apart and outside of it.

Contrasting with the images explored above of impaired bodies that stand outside the textual fabric, the pacing and pauses in *Footfalls* are founded on a language where the 'rhythm of movement and the balance of sound create May's dance of death' (72)[235], or her dance to death, incorporating the theme of mortality that is shared by all. The atmosphere of the play signifies the element of physical exhaustion coupled with non-presence in which May is "not really there"[236]. She appears on stage with '*dishevelled grey hair, worn grey wrap hiding feet trailing*' (399) with a '*clearly audible rhythmic tread' (399).* The stage directions create a dim and hazy atmosphere in which May's presence and trailing completely blend into the narrative without "short-circuiting" or rupturing it:

> *Lighting: dim, strongest at floor level. Less on body, least on head.*
>
> *Voices: both low and slow throughout*
>
> *Curtain. Stage in darkness.*
>
> *Faint single chime. Pause as echoes die.* (399)

The significance of textual short circuiting lies in highlighting how vulnerability and impairments are overlapping but also distinct categories. Unlike the impaired body that triggers absorption and resists dissolution under the fabric of non-individualised disabilities, May's pacing resonates with the collective human condition of suffering and mortality, which nonetheless remains separate from disabilities and impairments.

In *Footfalls* the image of embodied presence and non-presence is consolidated by infusing the elements of light, sound and voices. The stage image is visually and auditorily evocative since readers and audience can witness and hear the protagonist's footsteps. These affordances are eliminated in the radio plays, because the medium only allows for a maximum proliferation of sounds, at the expense of definite spaces, lights and more importantly a visible human body. This brings into focus questions pertaining to the representation of impairments and disabilities in the radio plays where human embodiment is entirely missing. Critics of Beckett's radio plays have mostly concentrated on the

235 Ibid,.
236 Ibid,.

"disembodied nature of voice"[237] where the predominance of subjectivity and interiority has diminished the role of embodiment. Martin Esslin, in his study of Beckett's radio plays, commented that through the use of acoustics, Beckett creates 'a subjective reality halfway between the objective events experienced and their subjective reaction within the mind of the character who experiences them – halfway between walking consciousness and dreamlike states and halfway between fact and fantasy, even hallucination' (277)[238]. Theoretical analysis of the radio as a medium has often annihilated the corporeal aspect of the sounds and voices, something that Clas Zilliacus also emphasises, stating that: 'it is characteristic of the radio medium that its means of expression are aural, temporal, nonspatial, and uncorporeal' (37) [239]. Augmenting this analysis, Brater argues that the 'rhythms, melody, and texture…of a highly compressed vocal style…take the place of embodiment, [and] *gestus*' (16).[240] But the extensive and exclusive focus on the disembodied nature of voices and acoustics has not only disregarded the fact that voices and sounds have an ordinary material source but has also failed to examine Beckett's dexterity in blending the corporeal aspects of sounds (like huffing, panting and footfalls) into a medium which restricts the corporeal and visual. These bodily sounds also happened to be the inspiration behind Becketts's first radio play *All That Fall* where, like *Footfalls*, the sound of the footsteps determine the course of the play, but unlike the latter, at the expense of a visually perceptible embodiment.

Beckett's way of garnering acoustic resources in composing a radio play resided in exploiting to the maximum the sounds of things and the body: 'Never thought about a radio play technique, but in the dead of t'other night got a nice gruesome idea full of cartwheels and dragging feet and puffing and panting' (52)[241] . Forgoing the traditional use of voice and long vocal passages as in many radio plays, *All That Fall* is configured as a highly corporeal and physical play where the central acoustic image of the text is founded upon the visible exteriority of the body and its recurrent failings. The fundamental sound in the play is that of the protagonists, Mrs. Rooney and Dan Rooney's slow dragging feet; where the former is suffering from corpulence, "rheumatism and childlessness" (174), and the latter is '*blind, thumps the ground with his stick and pants incessantly*' (187). *All that Fall* charts Mrs. Rooney's journey to the train station to receive her husband, and their laborious journey back together which is punctuated by their panting, huffing, arduous walk and frequent halts – '*They move on. Dragging feet,*

237 Brater, Enoch. *The Drama in the Text : Beckett's Late Fiction*. New York ; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994. Print.

238 Esslin, Martin. "Samuel Beckett and the Art of Radio." On Beckett: Essays and Criticism, edited by S. E. Gontarski, Anthem Press, 2012, pp. 273–291.

" " . *Mediations : Essays on Brecht, Beckett, and the Media.* London: Eyre Methuen, 1980. Print.

239 Zilliacus, Clas. *Beckett and Broadcasting : A Study of the Works of Samuel Beckett for and in Radio and Television*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1976. Print.

240 Ibid,.

241 Beckett in a letter to Nancy Cunard : Bair, Deirdre. *Samuel Beckett: A Biography*. London: J. Cape, 1978. Print.

panting, thudding stick' (190). The iteration of the sounds of dragging feet, puffing and the silence of halting are indispensable to the play because they manifest the corporeal differences of the central figures in the play, and so also lay bare the phenomenological, aesthetic and ethical resonances of living with physical discomforts and sensory impairments and how these affect the listeners who are at the receiving end of these sounds.

Movement in *All That Fall* revolves around recurring physical discomfort and its embarrassing visibility. This is palpable when Mr. Slocum offers Mrs. Rooney a lift in his car, who, given her rheumatism and obesity, is unable to seat herself:

> MRS ROONEY: [*Dubiously*] But would I ever get in, you look very high off the ground today, these new balloon tyres I presume. [*Sound of the door opening and MRS ROONEY trying to get in.]* Does this roof never come off ? No [*Efforts of MRS. ROONEY*]. No…. I'll never do it … You'll have to get down MR. SLOCUM and help me from the rear. [*Pause*] what was that? [*Pause. Aggrieved*] that was your suggestion, MR SLOCUM, not mine. Drive on, Sir, drive on.
>
> MR SLOCUM: [*Switching off engine*] I'm coming. Mrs. Rooney, I'm coming, give me time, I'm as stiff as yourself.
>
> [*Sound of MR. SLOCUM extracting himself from driver's seat]*
>
> MR SLOCUM: [*In position behind her*], Now, Mrs Rooney, how shall we do this?
>
> MRS ROONEY: As if I were a bale, Mr Slocum, don't be afraid. [*Pause. Sounds of effort*]. That's the way! [*Effort*]. Lower! [*Effort]* Wait! [*Pause]* No, don't let go! [*Pause*] Suppose I do get up, will I ever get down? (177)

The pauses and sound of effort here are pertinent in gauging the extent of the embodied nature of the act. Moreover, contrary to Esslin's argument that, 'the action of *All That Fall* is experienced by the listener subjectively from Maddy Rooney's point of view' (277)[242], it can be said that action in the

242 Esslin, Martin. "Samuel Beckett and the Art of Radio." On Beckett: Essays and Criticism, edited by S. E. Gontarski, Anthem Press, 2012, pp. 273–291.

play manifests a diverse phenomenology of bodily pain and discomfort; it is simultaneously objective, and matter and material oriented, as opposed to being representative of a single subjective experience.

Maddy Rooney's persistent doubt in her physical abilities has been interpreted by critics as echoing a 'world that exists within the skull of Maddy Rooney' where she 'explores the possibility of varying self through physical means' (Ben-Zvi 28)[243]. Such interpretations, whilst allocating some importance to the physical, utilise it as a vehicle to articulate the problems of the inner. To the contrary, the acoustic landscape of *ATF* is remarkably embodied; the confrontations with bodily discomfort rupture the flow of the narrative where perpetual "short-circuiting" reminds the listeners that despite the absence of a tangible human form the play, 'prioritises exteriority and matter over interiority and the problem of conceptual thought' (Maude 49)[244]. There are many instances of textual "short-circuiting" in *ATF* but it is remarkably different from the previously discussed stage plays, precisely because, unlike the latter, Beckett's way of fragmenting the text is not through silences and pauses that elide articulation of aetiology of diseases and impairments, but by projecting the issue of corporeal difference and visibility through the medium of sound. The recurrent consternation of Maddy Rooney at being unseen by the people around her are examples where she brings attention to herself not by way of silence but by insisting on being seen and helped. On being ignored by the porter, she exclaims in anguish, 'Don't mind me. Don't take any notice of me. I do not exist. The fact is well known' (179). Another such incident transpires when she beckons Miss Fitt towards her – 'Am I then invisible, Miss Fitt? Is this cretonne so becoming to me that I merge into the masonry? [*MISS FITT descends a step*.] That is right, Miss Fitt, look closely and you will finally distinguish a once female shape' (182). Maddy Rooney's constant struggles to bring everyone's attention towards herself denotes her strong stance towards non-assimilation. Contrasting with Miss Fitt, who represents a passive non-existence: 'I suppose the truth is I am not there, Mrs.Rooney, just not really there at all. I see, hear and smell and so on, I go through the usual motions, but my heart is not in it' (183), Maddy Rooney perpetually asserts her distinctive presence throughout the play. By unabashedly evincing her need for assistance, 'Give me your arm before I scream down the parish' (183), and the sheer sounds of "toiling up steps" and panting she makes her presence in the play both corporeal and distinguishable. This again controverts Quayson's critique of "aesthetic nervousness" and "hermeneutical impasse" in Beckett's dramaturgy, because even in his radio plays Beckett allows physical discomforts and impairments to gain fuller expression

243 Ben-Zvi, Linda. "Samuel Beckett's Media Plays." *Modern Drama* 28.1 (1985): 22-37. Web.

244 Maude, Ulrika. *Beckett, Technology and the Body.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

and representation through the medium of the sounds of tedious feet in conjunction with the renewed effort to count the steps:

> *[Feet cease. Stick tapping at steps.]*
>
> MR ROONEY: I have been up and down these steps five thousand times, and still I do not know how many there are. When I think there are six there are four or five or seven or eight and when I remember there are five or seven or eight. And when I remember there are five there are three or four or six or seven and when finally I realise there are seven there are five, or six, or eight or none. Sometimes I wonder if they do not change them in the night. [*Pause. Irritably*] Well? How many do you make them today?
>
> MRS ROONEY: Do not ask me to count, Dan, not now.
>
> MR ROONEY: Not count! One of the few satisfactions in life!
>
> MRS ROONEY: Not step, Dan, please, I always get them wrong… No, just cling to me, and all will be well. [*Confused noise of descent. Panting, stumbling, ejaculations, curses. Silence*.] (190)

The hyper-conscious nature of Dan Rooney's awareness of the physical surrounding reflected through his step counting, stick tapping and subsequent miscalculations, imparts to the play a sense of spatiality even in the non-physical medium of radio. Spatiality in *ATF*, contrary to depicting 'the atmosphere of an inner landscape' (Worth 193)[245], highlights 'the situatedness and facticity of its characters' (Maude 56)[246]. This is also evident in Dan Rooney's counting errors which signify the un-graspability and transience of the surrounding exteriority which is independent of the characters' subjectivity and interiority. His consternation at the inaccessibility of the railway station is a vehement depiction of the disorienting nature of his surroundings:

> MR ROONEY: Never tread these cursed steps again. Trudge this hellish road for the last time. Sit at home on the remnants of my bottom counting the hours– till the next meal. [*Pause.*] The very thought puts life in me! Forward, before it dies! *[They move on. Dragging feet, panting, thudding stick.]* (190)

Maude, in her essay "Hearing Beckett", has vehemently argued against the prioritisation of the subjective attributes in *All That Fall* that work by obliterating its explicitly exterior, realist and

245 Drakakis, John. *British Radio Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981. Print.

246 Maude, Ulrika. *Beckett, Technology and the Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

embodied facets. She claims that 'in *All That Fall*, Beckett systematically rejects [the schematised representations of the human body for metaphorical reasons] in favour of explicit representations of suffering and the body's inherently deviant disposition' (55)[247]. While Maude's assertion equates the failings of the body as its deviant tendencies, she fails to see the ethical aspects of such representation. Beckett, in depicting the grotesque and abject nature of embodiment is not only normalising the socially deviant and supposedly embarrassing tendencies of the body where huffing, panting, and walking slowly are readily associated with being unfit and unhealthy, but is also commenting on the dominant culture where being athletic and agile is the only available model of well-being. Rather than equating pain and discomfort with human suffering, as Maude does, Beckett puts forth corporeal differences and impairments as variants of an embodied state of being which must not be perceived as "horrifying, abject or grotesque" (55)[248]. In so doing, Beckett aligns a strong social element to the reception and integration of disabilities. Most critics have failed to take into account the constant violence that Mr and Mrs Roney are subjected to:

> MRS ROONEY: The Lynch twins are jeering at us.
>
> *[Cries]*
>
> Mr Rooney: Will they pelt us with mud today, do you suppose?
>
> *[Cries](191)*

The excerpt not only contradicts the interiority claims but also lays bare the hostility with which visible corporeal differences are treated in a social domain. Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that the surrounding environment is highly inaccessible to the couple, which serves to exacerbate their pain and causes them to pant and halt even more. No sooner do the couple display a desire to halt and sit on a bench than they are made aware that the station is devoid of one:

> MRS ROONEY: Sit down on what?
>
> MR ROONEY: On a bench, for example.
>
> MRS ROONEY: There is no bench.

247 Ibid,.
248 Ibid,.

MR ROONEY: Then on a bank, let us sink down upon a bank. (192)

The aggregate of dismal conversations and acoustic elements unearth the heuristic gaps embedded in the social understanding of corporeal differences. By espousing the ideals of limitless health and vigour the phenomenology of impairments is overlooked and subsumed under the supercrip narrative. Consonant with the "freezing points" and stares rampant in Beckett's stage drama, the silences, cries and halts of Mr and Mrs Rooney conjure up an acoustic image of corporeal difference and singularity signalling to listeners and readers alike to register and "absorb" their embodied realities and experiences. Diverging from the previously mentioned pseudo couples on stage, Mr and Mrs Rooney are the only ones who show little to no antagonism or signs of inter-exclusivity towards each other. They are the only couple who function in a real social world beyond the abstract unreal setting of the stage drama. In a realistic social space, they suffer from the same nightmarish realities of being frequently attacked and laughed at. In *ATF*, Beckett deftly constructs a sound scape of corporeal differences where the phenomenology of embodiment is fraught with social, cultural and ethical resonances.

The Entanglements of the Animate with the Inanimate

Beckett's stance on disability is therefore more intricate and comprehensive than that construed by Quayson, in that it demonstrates what Connor reads as Beckett's 'jaggedly indigestible … antagonism to linking' (198)[249] or pure assimilation in which every corporeal difference is valued and acknowledged in its individuality and for its own sake. In the plays, we discern linkages between the human and material world where immersion in the latter is the fundamental mise en scène and raison d'être of being. The array of characters: Willie and Winnie, A and B, Clov and Hamm, Nell and Nagg, Pozzo and Lucky, Estragon and Vladimir, Mr and Mrs Rooney, limn copious uses and significations of things each reaching its exhaustive threshold. As discussed throughout this chapter, tools are deployed to facilitate haptic and phatic contact; to etch out zones of existence and spaces of inhabitancy; to gain proprioceptive information and stimulate embodied movement; for assault and self-defence; as props for play and collaboration to pass the time; and to extricate the largely absent meaning and element of surprise. The myriad entanglements of matter with materiality and their underlying symbolic relevance pave the way for further investigations into the nature of these entanglements. Thus, the current chapter segues into the forthcoming sections of the study which

249 Connor, Steven. *Beckett, Modernism and the Material Imagination*. 2014. Web.

examine the transmuting conceptualisation of matter – namely different kinds of prosthetic devices – and its impact upon the wider understanding of disability, corporeality and technology. Resonating with the quotation[250] in the chapter title, subsequent chapters will reflect upon the life of things, and more significantly on the precise nature and attributes of the life in question.

250 "Ah yes, things have their life, this is what I always say, *things* have a life" from *Happy Days.*

Chapter 3: From Enchanted Materialism to a Conscious and Ethical Anthropocentrism

Fallibility and limitation are both resonant with the accepted fact and ethos of being human, signifying our vulnerability and therefore our endemic need to collaborate with others in our shared environment – one that comprises humans, animals, and other inanimate things and tools. Contemporary approaches to the phenomenology, ontology, and sociology of the human subject have extensively focused on these multifarious collaborations that humans have with their "thick" or dense environments. A particular focus of such enquiries is the expansive use of technology in our everyday existence[251]. However, more relevant to the investigation here is the way so many investigators[252] explore the subject of the evident burgeoning technologization with absolute disregard for the relevance of human embodiment, agency, will and consciousness in upgrading, updating, and manufacturing the latest technological breakthroughs. Touting themselves as "posthuman" and "transhuman" they deleteriously and often blindly exhume the human from their turf heralding what might be described as an era of techno-fetishism where technology is seen not only to far outdo the material body with its limitations but also to wield and therefore offer more agential freedom as it impacts human bodies and minds. These rapidly proliferating misinterpretations of technology have pervaded the domain of

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251 For more information on phenomenological approaches to human–environment interactions refer to:

Clark, Andy, et al. *Decomposing the Will*. Oxford University Press, 2013. Web.

" ", and Oxford University Press. *Supersizing the Mind : Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension*. Oxford University Press, 2008. Web.

" ". *Natural-Born Cyborgs : Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*. Oxford University Press, 2003. Web.

Gallagher, Shaun. *Enactivist Interventions : Rethinking the Mind*. First ed., 2017. Web.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Primacy of Perception : and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics*. Northwestern University Press, 1964. Print.

" ". *Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962. Print.

Noë, Alva. *Action in Perception*. MIT Press, 2004. Print.

For recent ontological approaches to humans– objects collaborations read:

Barad, Karen Michelle. *Meeting the Universe Halfway : Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press, 2007. Web.

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter : a Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2010. Web.

Coole, Diana H., and Frost, Samantha. *New Materialisms : Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Duke University Press, 2010. Web.

Noë, Alva. *Strange Tools : Art and Human Nature*. First ed., 2015. Web.

Sociological perspectives on human, machines, and environment/s can be found in: objectsBennett, Jane. "Systems and Things: a Response to Graham Harman and Timothy Morton.(Viewpoint Essay)." *New Literary History*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2012, pp. 225–233.

Latour, Bruno., et al. *Reassembling the Social : an Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press, 2005. Web.

Malm, Andreas. *The Progress of This Storm : Nature and Society in a Warming World*. 2018. Web.

Whitehead, Anne, et al. *The Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities*. 2016. Web.

Hacking, Ian. *The Social Construction of What?* Harvard University Press, 1999. Web.

Harman, Graham. *The Quadruple Object*. Zero Books, 2011. Web.

" " . *Bruno Latour : Reassembling the Political*. 2014. Web.

Pickering, Andrew. *The Mangle of Practice : Time, Agency and Science*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. Web.

252 Bruno Latour, Karen Barad, Diana Coole, and Jane Bennet etc., have extensively delved into the human– machine interface only to attribute power, agency, consciousness, and action to material objects. Moreover, even recent understandings of technology and human embodiment depicted in the works of Katherine Hayles, Cary Wolfe etc., have promulgated a perspective privileging the former over the latter. These understandings will be explored and critiqued as the chapter progresses.

common understanding, so much so that their confounding assumptions often go unchecked. The realm that is most adversely affected perhaps by the recent turn to this newest "vital" materialism is the reception and conception of disability, prostheses, and the place of the human in relation to a changing environment. The precarious position of the said categories namely, human, prostheses and people with disabilities, demands exclusive critical appraisal because not only are they being misunderstood but are also being continually erased in the wake of militant antihumanism, transhumanism and posthumanism. The intention of the current chapter is to elaborate and critically engage the aforementioned vogueish theoretical constructs, i.e., antihumanism, posthumanism, transhumanism, and new materialisms, in order to reveal the necessity of reinstating an anthropocentric perspective towards prosthetics and disability. In doing so, this study aims to propose an ethical understanding of anthropocentrism and humanism, which instead of establishing the superiority of the human, shall propound the need to establish its centrality under the rubric of embodied differences, vulnerability and limitations.

Progressing from the previous section, the present chapter focusses on impairments, both physical and sensory, in light of visible and non-visible assistive technology, i.e., hip pins, hip replacements, hearing aids, wheelchairs, crutches, sticks, Zimmer frames and the like through their representation in a range of recent fictions and other kinds of prose writing. The chapter will examine a range of fictional texts: from Joanne Greenberg's *In this Sign* (1976), Rosellen Brown's *Tender Mercies (*1978*)*, Patrick McGrath's *Dr. Haggard's Disease* (1993), James Kelman's *How late It Was How Late* (1994), JM Coetzee's *Slow Man* (2005*)*, David Lodge's *Deaf Sentence* (2008); as well as autobiographical writing or memoirs from John M Hull's audio memoirs, entitled *Notes on Blindness* (2016) Gail Caldwell's *New life No Instructions (2014)*, Crosby's *A Body Undone* (2018*)*, and Noel Holston's *Life After Deaf* (2019*)*. These texts, that range across different genres, have been chosen with the aim of examining the depiction of a diversity of experiences mediated through different devices available in the prose medium, with the anticipation that this will facilitate a nuanced, and better-informed close analysis of the way that different contemporary and modern writers, working in a range of cultural contexts as well as genres, have presented and communicated manifold interactions between disability and assistive technology.

In subsequent sections the fictional delineations of the said interactions will be simultaneously juxtaposed with their autobiographical illustrations depicting the authenticity and phenomenological underpinnings of these texts. The permeability and fluidity between different genres gestures to the

instability of the "autobiographical pact"[253], to show that writers of fiction too challenge and subvert it to redefine the reality of fiction not as purely imagined untruths but as poignant realities bearing both a phenomenological and verifiable relevance. In this way, such texts challenge the basis of Lejeune's autobiographical pact that 'opposed to all forms of fiction, biography and autobiography are referential texts: exactly like scientific or historical discourse, they claim to provide information about reality external to the text, and so to submit a test of verification' (22)[254]. In the sections to come, we will see how writers of fiction confound Lejeune's claim to external referentiality as being intrinsic only to certain kinds of nonfiction. Accordingly it will be seen how autobiographers and memoirists deploy external and self-referentiality (and the uses of the first person pronoun) in their works to dissolve the "autobiographical act"[255], which Paul Eakin describes as the final moment of life writing which enacts and enunciates the coming together of language and self akin to a self-conscious knowledge of the self or the "I-am-me" experience (219)[256].

This excessive preoccupation with the self, which theorists of the autobiography[257] have mostly taken as an unquestioned element of life writing, has been questioned by the autobiographers examined here, who, in describing their real life experiences of impairments, have enthusiastically included those of their friends and family[258]; contrary to the assumption that life writing is purely about self-discovery and "self-invention"[259] the memoirists in this study, in attempting to make sense of their changed embodiments and environments, have also aimed to help, educate and inform their readers towards a phenomenologically oriented understanding of disabilities. Furthermore, by setting fiction and non-fiction, memoir and novel, side by side, this reading shall delineate how different writers are giving shape to their experiences of using assistive technology, facilitating a reinvention of humanism

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253 This idea belongs to the French philosopher Lejeune who defines the 'autobiographical pact' as an implicit understanding between the writer and reader of autobiography, stipulating the absolute identicality and similarity between the author, narrator and protagonist of an autobiography, whereby the auto–biographer is under the pledge: "I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth , and nothing but the truth" (22). The autobiographical pact is therefore an oath signifying the experienced reality of the content and subject matter of an autobiography.
Lejeune, Philippe, and Eakin, Paul John. *On Autobiography*. University of Minnesota Press, 1988. Print.

254 Ibid,

255 Eakin, Paul John. *Fictions in Autobiography : Studies in the Art of Self-Invention*. Course Book. ed., 2014. Print.

256 Ibid,.

257 For more information on the theories of the self in autobiography, refer to:
De Man, Paul. "Autobiography as De-Facement." *MLN*, vol. 94, no. 5, 1979, pp. 919–930.
Lejeune, Philippe, and Eakin, Paul John. *On Autobiography*. University of Minnesota Press, 1988. Print.
Eakin, Paul John. *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention*. Course Book. ed., 2014. Print.
Olney, James. Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography. 2017. Print.
" " . Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical. Princeton University Press, 1980. Print.
"The Art of Fiction XXVII: Mary McCarthy," *Paris Review*, No. 27 ,1962,, p. 94.
"Eye for I:: Making and Unmaking Autobiography in Film." *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2014, p. 296. Print.

258This chapter will explore this further.

259 Speaking of the autobiographical quest for the self, Mary McCarthy put it this way: "It's absolutely useless to look for it, you won't find it, but it's possible in some sense to make it" (94).
"The Art of Fiction XXVII: Mary McCarthy," *Paris Review*, No. 27 ,1962,, p. 94.

which, despite acknowledging the increasing significance of technology, and the technical in shaping human lives, does not, however, advocate either total surrender to the machinic counterpart or the establishment of a solipsistic and self-sufficient humanism that needs neither machines nor external scaffoldings for sustenance.

Disability Technology in the Wake of Posthumanism and Transhumanism

Given the primary concern of the chapter with assistive devices, some initial consideration of the various definitions provided by nationally and internationally recognised disability forums seems useful as a starting point for closer analysis. Here are some key definitions:

> Assistive technology can be defined as a product – either high or low tech – that helps people engage in activities or tasks that would otherwise not be possible. In the context of disability, some examples include hearing and listening devices, reading glasses, wheelchair or other mobility devices; and traffic lights accompanied by sound. (3)[260]

> Assistive technologies are products and services that empower disabled people to become more independent. Under the Equality Act 2010, assistive technology is recognised as a "reasonable adjustment" which should be made available to prevent discrimination in a wide variety of contexts. The term covers a diverse range of technologies from wheelchairs and walking sticks to environmental controls which enable users to operate door openers, computers and other household appliances with a single accessible device.[261]

> Assistive technology (AT) supports and enhances the independence of disabled people and those with health conditions. It can support people to do daily tasks, be more mobile and participate more fully in society and in employment. (3)[262]

> The United States Assistive Technology Act of 1998 [105–394, S.2432] defines an 'assistive technology device' as 'any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used

260 Toolkit for Disability for Africa

261https://www.togetherforshortlives.org.uk/get-support/supporting-you/family-resources/assistive-technology/#:~:text=Assistive%20technologies%20are%20products%20and,a%20wide%20variety%20of%20contexts.

262 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/673/673.pdf

> to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities'. (348)[263]

A brief perusal of these definitions highlights the essential requirements of any assistive technology (AT from here) namely: functionality, universality of design, accessibility, availability and customisability as suitable to specific human needs and intentionality. The implied agency in these understandings is specifically invested in its human operator as opposed to the its machinic counterpart. But the argument of this thesis is that these ethical and human(e) approaches are being devalued by the emergence of a fetishist drive to supersede the human. The initial outcroppings of these superhuman fantasies are evident in much of the Posthumanist theorising that came into theoretical prominence in the Arts and Humanities in the mid 1990s, described in the rhetoric of its early endorsers as, 'a historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical informatics, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore, a historical development that points toward the necessity of new theoretical paradigms (but also thrusts them on us), a new mode of thought that comes after the cultural repressions and fantasies, the philosophical protocols and evasions of humanism as historically specific phenomenon' (Wolfe xv)[264].

As evident from earlier discussion, the ethos of posthumanism is founded on a paradigm that comes after the human[265]. Further extending this line of thought, early prominent thinkers like Donna Haraway (1991) and Katherine Hayles (1999 & 2005) posit the decentred non-unified posthuman subject as, 'an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction' (Hayles 391)[266]. A popular

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263 Watson, Nick, and Vehmas, Simo. *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*. Second ed., 2020. Print.

264 Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism?* University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Print.

Garcia, Christien. *Donna Haraway's A Cyborg Manifesto*. 2018. Web.

Haraway, Donna Jeanne., and ProQuest. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women : the Reinvention of Nature*. Routledge, 1991. Print.

265 For more comprehensive information on the postulates of Posthumanism check:

Badmington, Neil. *Posthumanism*. Macmillan, 2000. Print.

Braidotti, Rosi. "Posthuman Humanities." *European Educational Research Journal*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2013, pp. 1–19.

——————— The Posthuman. Polity, 2013.Fukuyama, F., 2002. *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*, New York: Picador Books. Print.

Hughes, J. *Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to The Redesigned Human of the Future*, Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2004. Print.

Haraway, Donna, 1991. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge, pp. 149–182.

Hayles, Katherine. *My Mother Was a Computer : Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*. University of Chicago Press, 2005. Print.

———————. *How We Became Posthuman : Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. University of Chicago Press, 1999. Print.

Murray, Stuart. *Disability and the Posthuman: Bodies, Technology, and Cultural Futures*. Liverpool University Press, 2020. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv11qdtsh. Accessed 25 Sept. 2020.

Nayar, Pramod K. *Posthumanism*. Polity, 2014. Print.

Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism?* University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Print.

266 Hayles, Katherine, and American Council of Learned Societies. *How We Became Posthuman : Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. University of Chicago Press, 1999. Print.

and mainstream name for this new subject is the "cyborg"[267], which Haraway famously described as 'a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction' (149)[268]. The iterated emphases on the technologised, informational and non-centered attributes of the cyborg, instead of debunking the "fantasies" of humanism, have ironically helped to legitimise the unleashing of a widespread cultural discursive ethos and practice of regarding as normative and ideal a technologically augmented physical and cognitive hyper-ability; rather than appreciating the limitations of biology and therefore of the vulnerability of all things living, this has contributed to a proclivity towards rigorous medicalisation and enhancement of the body that promises a future of immortality, unending youth, absolute perfection, eugenics, and most importantly, Singularity[269]. This concept, introduced by Ray Kurzweil, postulates the possibility of human evolution beyond the current confines of dead matter through the medium of "intelligence explosion", 'especially through the conversion of "dumb" matter to "smart matter"[270]. Singularity can thus be understood as 'the ability to convert matter, at a molecular level, to material capable of computation' (Pilsch 148)[271]. Such characteristics also signify the threshold at which the posthuman subject enters the transhuman territory.

Founded by Nick Bostrom and David Pearce in 1998, transhumanism[272] views the human condition as a barrier that must be transcended through technological prowess. In the original manifesto,

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267 A portmanteau term for cybernetic and organism

268 Haraway, Donna Jeanne., and ProQuest. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism Late Twentieth in the Century". *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women : the Reinvention of Nature*. Routledge, 1991. Print.

269 For more information on this, read:

Kurzweil, Ray. *The Singularity Is near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. Duckworth, 2013. Print.

Pilsch, Andrew. *Transhumanism: Evolutionary Futurism and the Human Technologies of Utopia*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt1pwt7qm. Accessed 9 Oct. 2020.

270 This active computational matter/ material is called "computronium"; it emerged from work done in the 1980s on cellular automata by Tommaso Toffoli and Norman Margolus" (Pilsch 149). They argued that, "in programmable matter, the same cubic meter of machinery can become a wind tunnel at one moment, a polymer soup at the next; it can model a sea of fermions, a genetic pool, or an epidemiology experiment at the flick of a console key" (263–72) Tommaso Toffoli and Norman Margolus, "Programmable Matter: Concepts and Realization," *Physica DNonlinear Phenomena* 47, no. 1, January 1, 1991.

271 Pilsch, Andrew. *Transhumanism: Evolutionary Futurism and the Human Technologies of Utopia*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt1pwt7qm. Accessed 9 Oct. 2020.

272 For more information on this, refer:

Bordo, S. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, Berkeley: University of California Press,1993. Print.

Bostrom, N. "Human Genetic Enhancements: A Transhumanist Perspective", *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 37(4): 493–506, 2003. Print.

Brock, D."Enhancements of Human Function: Some Distinctions for Policymakers", in E. Parens (ed.), *Enhancing Human Traits*, Washington: Georgetown University Press, pp. 48–69, 1998. Print.

Bublitz, J. C. and Merkel, R."Autonomy and Authenticity of Enhanced Personality Traits", *Bioethics*, 23(6): 360–374, 2009. Print.

Buchanan, A., Brock, D., Wikler, D., and Daniels, N. *From Chance to Choice: Genetics and Justice*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Print.

Buchanan, A. *Beyond Humanity?: The Ethics of Biomedical Enhancement*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.

Clarke, S., Savulescu, J., Coady, C.A.J., Guibilini, A., and Sanyal, S.2016. *The Ethics of Human Enhancement: Understanding the Debate*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.Fitzgerald, K., 2008.Web.

"Medical Enhancement: A Destination of Technological, Not Human, Betterment", in B. Gordijn and R. Chadwick (eds.), *Medical Enhancement and Post-Modernity*, Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 39–55.

Transhumanist Declaration, they perceive the prospects of humanity to be 'radically changed by technology...[They] foresee the feasibility of redesigning the human condition, including such parameters as the inevitability of ageing, limitations on human and artificial intellects, unchosen psychology, suffering, and our confinement to the planet earth' (Humanity + 2012)[273]. The ultimate agenda of transhumanism is then to 'advocate the moral right for those who so wish to use technology to extend their mental and physical (including reproductive) capacities…to improve their control over their own lives...[to] seek personal growth beyond our current biological limitations'[274].

The essential difference between posthumanism and transhumanism is that while the former seeks to forgo the Western conception of the human and supplant it with novel and even subversive configurations of hybridity and information patterns, the latter pursues to completely overcome and transcend the flaws and limitations of human materiality inevitably beckoning towards a future where the worth of individual life would be calibrated by its cognitive and physical calibre; where machines/technology may exercise more power and control. Anxiety over the growing prevalence of such a stance towards disability and differences is affirmed by Tom Koch who identifies an "agnostic, eugenic, and utilitarian"[275] bent in contemporary bioethics, furthering his observation that, 'in contemporary bioethics the protected individual is protected only as long as he or she measures up in the sense that his or her social niche is acceptably cost efficient' (258)[276]. These dystopian reflections are instantiated by the recent wave of "Liberal Eugenics" backed by the bioethicist and socialist James Hughes, who calls for the elimination of disabilities, asserting, 'What I advocate for is called Liberal Eugenics. And so we are going to have… fewer short, ugly, fat, dumb people in the world'[277].

The widescale result of such contemptible aspirations and the bourgeoning dissemination of the tenets of liberal eugenics is the veneration of technologies associated with promulgating blind optimisms towards augmentations and enhancements. Medical objects, precisely prostheses of every kind, are susceptible to being regarded as "transhumanising" devices that change the meaning of being disabled and/or impaired. Vivian Sobchack makes a telling observation on the transformations the term prosthetic has undergone, wherein it now stands for an adjective that signifies a metonymic and 'shifting constellation of relationships between bodies, technologies, and subjectivities' (309)[278]. Her

273 Transhumanist Declaration, Humanity+

274 Ibid,.

275 Koch, Tom. "Bioethics as Ideology: Conditional and Unconditional Values.(Author Abstract)." *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2006, pp. 251–267.

276 Ibid,.

277 *Fixed.* Dir. Regan Brashear. New Day Films, 2013. Kanopy. Web. 26 Feb. 2020.

278 Ibid,.

poignant remark suggests that once an individual resorts to using prostheses, his or her former condition of being human is reflexively upgraded into becoming a prosthetic being, or a cyborg. This involuntary transition itself marks a radical shift signifying an after and beyond of one's former status as human. The ensuing performance of the prosthetic self is a demanding enterprise, for it requires one to perpetually overcome one's vulnerabilities and limitations and to exceed one's possibilities lest signs of disapproval and failure plummet one into pitiless public shame. This is manifest in the Paralympian athlete Peers's remarks on extant perceptions on disability:

> She felt that the pedestal she was put on… turned the social inequality of disability into something to overcome, rather than something to challenge and change. She revealed how, for her, the heroic Paralympian relied on narratives of the 'pitiful cripple' who can't overcome and the burdensome 'gimp' who won't. Peers also commented that these narratives served to set disabled people apart, 'whether up on the pedestal or down in the gutter: they enable others not to look us in the eye, they induce us not to look into each other's and they encourage us not to look inside of ourselves. (339)[279]

In the excerpt above, Peers alludes to the pervasive and malignant discourse circumscribing supercripping[280]. Her assertion not only brings to the fore the deleterious impact of the strident emphasis on "over-coming" but also paints compelling spatial metaphors of a lofty high "pedestal" and lowly bottomless "gutter" to portray the juxtaposing social response to people with disabilities. The metaphorization of bodies and spaces, is analogous to what Johnson and Lakoff denote as "orientational metaphors"[281]. The roots of such metaphors lie in "our physical and cultural experience" (15)[282]; they posit our immediate orientation in space and are simultaneously suggestive of how our bodies interact with their larger physical, social and cultural environments varying from "culture to culture" (15)[283]. Additionally, in the aforementioned passage, Peers acknowledges the adjectives and nouns deployed to define the disabled: "the pitiful cripple", the "burdensome gimp", are not only dehumanising and derogatory terms but, as Zola argues, also convey a monotonal and limiting outlook. He writes:

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279 Watson, Nick, and Vehmas, Simo. *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*. Second ed., 2020. Print.

Peers, Danielle. "(Dis)Empowering Paralympic Histories: Absent Athletes and Disabling Discourses." *Disability & Society: 'Brave New World?' Disability and the 21st Century: Challenges and Solutions*, vol. 24, no. 5, 2009, pp. 653–665.

280The definition of "supercripping" has been extensively discussed and referenced to in the preceding chapters, and forms a central leitmotif of this thesis.

281 Lakoff, George., and Johnson, Mark. *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press, 2003.Print.

282 Ibid,..

283 Ibid,..

> A way of contextualizing our relationship to our bodies and our disabilities may not be in changing terms but in changing grammars. Our continual use of nouns and adjectives can only perpetuate the equation of the individual equalling the disability. No matter what noun we use, it substitutes one categorical definition for another. An adjective, colors and thus connotes the essential quality of the noun it modifies. Such adjectives as "misshapen", "deformed", "defective", "invalid"--far from connoting a specific quality of the individual--tend to taint the whole person … Prepositions, on the other hand, imply both 'a relationship to' and 'a separation from'. At this historical juncture the awkwardness in phrasing that often results may be all to the good, for it makes both user and hearer stop and think about what is meant, as in the phrases "people of color" and "persons with disabilities". Distance and relationship are also at the heart of some very common verb usages …Thus in describing an individual's relationship to an assistive device such as a wheelchair, the difference between "being confined to a wheelchair" and "using" one is a difference not only of terminology but of control. Medical language has long perpetuated this "disabled passivity" by its emphasis on what medicine continually does to its "patients" rather than with them. (170)[284]

Zola's contention bears relevantly on Peers's account. His worthy suggestion to use prepositions seems highly likely to redress the predominant status quo and may prove potent in erasing the "metonymic" bonding that Sobchack equates with the postmodern term "prosthetic".

The Metonymic Resonances of Deafness, and the Sign Language

The connotations of metonymy that Sobchak refers to necessitate vivid elucidation, for it would amplify the crucial significance of adopting and implementing an anthropocentric approach towards understanding AT and disability. The initial step in so doing is to distinguish metonymy from synecdoche, for they both serve a referential function albeit in significantly different ways. In the case of synecdoche 'a part of something is used to signify the whole or the whole is used to signify a part' (Abrams 132)[285]; this kind of foregrounding of a specific part only takes place when the part and its representative whole already constitute a recognisable connection[286]. A glaring example of synecdoche abounds in Joanne Greenberg's novel, *In this Sign* (1970), in which the author delves into the taboo

284 Zola, Irving Kenneth. "Self, Identity and the Naming Question: Reflections on the Language of Disability." *Social Science & Medicine* (1982), vol. 36, no. 2, 1993, pp. 167–173.

285 Abrams, M. H., and Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Eleventh ed., 2015. Print.

286 Examples of synecdoche involves the use of "shielders" to denote a protected category of mentally and physically vulnerable people during the Covid pandemic, or the use of "wheels" to denote automobiles.

around deafness and Sign language and the profundity and richness of expression innate in the use of signing and gesturing. It must not be overlooked that even the title of the novel carries synecdochic echoes, for the word 'sign' projects the performative, embodied and unspoken attributes of a speech form; here the 'sign' is not an empty gesture, a vague indication, or faint hint, but it connotes a semantic and semiotic gesture, a word that is neither uttered, nor spoken, nor heard but purely performed through hands. Thereby, the synecdoche of the title, resides in its reference to and representation of an entire pattern of language, founded upon hands and meaningful gesticulations.

It is evident in the example above that synecdoche, in highlighting and signifying a part of the whole does not replace the bigger picture but instead serves to indicate the larger narrative that remains to be explored. This is the exact point of disjunction between a synecdoche and metonymy. Lakoff and Johnson explain the latter as:

> Metonymy…has primarily a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to stand for another. But metonymy is not merely a referential device. It also serves the function of providing understanding. For example, in the case of the metonymy THE PART FOR THE WHOLE there are many parts that can stand for the whole. Which part we pick out determines which aspect of the whole we are focusing on. (37)[287]

Analogous to this definition, in the case of metonymy, a specific aspect of the part comes to dominate and colour the perception of the whole. This is apparent in the metonymic repercussions of deafness: widely understood as a state of speechlessness and muteness where all efforts at communication culminate in malapropisms. David Lodge, in his novel *Deaf Sentence (2008)* portrays this dehumanising aspect of living with deafness; he observes how 'strangers don't realise you're deaf until they been trying and failing to communicate with you for some time, and then it is with irritation rather than compassion' (15)[288]. He further elucidates that 'prophets and seers are sometimes blind – Tiresias for instance – but never deaf. Imagine putting your question to the Sybil and getting 'What What in reply' (15). Although Lodge makes comedy out of the insidious and humiliating side of deafness, he nonetheless projects the condition as an event that shapes one's social encounters and hijacks one's personality to the extent that deafness is deeply determining of social encounter. The widespread perception of deafness and the Deaf as being fraught with malapropisms on one side, and mute and

287 Ibid.,

288 Lodge, David. *Deaf Sentence.* Random House, 2008. Print.

stone-like – as in stone deaf – on the other, has promulgated a dangerous narrative, dictating that to be without sounds is tantamount to being bereft of speech and language.

Lennard Davis, in his landmark study *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, asserts how a metonymic relationship between bodily materiality and language has been deployed to establish the pre-eminence of the mouth, hand, and ears as the foremost sites for communication:

> The mouth is hypostatized as the font of poetic language, oratory, conversation, while the hand is made special as the locus of writing, scholarship, the essay, … the ear is the receiver of music, speech, of language – while the eye is the receiver of the artistic, of written knowledge. These assumptions remind us of the extent to which an economy of the body is involved in our own metaphors about language and knowledge. (103)[289]

These sanctified zones of language are obliterated and rendered defunct by a distinct mode of communication called Sign language, which obliterates the indispensability of the written and spoken word for the kinetic word. Though free of sound, Sign language is rich in meaning and expression, challenging the notion of the indispensability of sound to dialogue. The tensions between Sign language and the world of sound are evocatively portrayed in *In This Sign*, in which the Deaf protagonist Janice witnesses a violent accident that injures the hands of her Deaf colleague. The spectacle produces a calamitous mental image of muteness in Janice's mind, she thinks, 'to be without hands…it means to be dumb; it means never to talk again, like to be dead; one of us without hands' (32)[290]. The passage disintegrates the cultural assumption that language is predominantly a form of oral/aural communication. Rather, it centralizes the hands as the chief bearers of linguistic expression, a loss of which is identical to morbid speechlessness. Thus, sign language configures a separate domain of language, where one's animate body, spatial orientation and kinetic repertoire come together in a semantic flow. The excerpts above reveal the misconceived metonymic associations rife in the wider social reception of deafness and the sign language. In conjunction, they also evince the centrality of human experience in understanding the social and embodied repercussions of living with disabilities.

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289 Davis, Lennard J., and American Council of Learned Societies. *Enforcing Normalcy : Disability, Deafness, and the Body*. London ; New York: Verso, 1995. ACLS Humanities E-Book. Web.

290 Greenberg, Joanne. *In this Sign.* Holt Paperback: New York, 1984. Print.

Cyborgism, Deafness and Technology

So far, this exploration has only focussed on the fictional and purely bodily experience of deafness to the exclusion of AT such as cochlear implants, hearing aids, and other supportive and/or corrective technologies surrounding hearing loss. The ensuing section shall analyse the confluence of technology, sign language and deafness, with the aim to thoroughly investigate the position of disability and technology in the wake of rapidly proliferating cyborgism and posthumanism. The term cyborg was put into academic circulation initially in Donna Haraway's now seminal and hugely influential essay, "The Cyborg Manifesto" where she designates it as:

> A cybernetic organism, a fusion of the organic and the technical forged in particular, historical, cultural practices. Cyborgs are not about machine and the Human, as if such Things and Subjects universally existed. Instead, cyborgs are about specific historical machines and people in interaction turns out to be painfully counterintuitive for the analyst of techsciences. (51)[291]

> My cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work. One of my premises is that most American socialists and feminists see deepened dualisms of mind and body, animal and machine, idealism and materialism in the social practices, symbolic formulations, and physical artefacts associated with 'high technology' and scientific culture. From *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse, 1964) to *The Death of Nature* (Merchant, 1980), the analytic resources developed by progressives have insisted on the necessary domination of technics and recalled us to an imagined organic body to integrate our resistance. Another of my premises is that the need for unity of people trying to resist world-wide intensification of domination has never been more acute. But a slightly perverse shift of perspective might better enable us to contest for meanings, as well as for other forms of power and pleasure in technologically mediated societies. (151)[292]

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291 Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1988, pp. 575–599. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3178066. Accessed 21 June 2021.

292 " " . "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" . In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Pp. 149-181. New York: Routledge, 1991. Print.

Haraway's cyborg is unambiguously a socio-political, historical and medical mediation. It is founded on the possibilities of navigating the persistent dualisms between man and machine; men and women; nature and culture; and mind and body. Thus, in its founding iterations, the cyborg is a subject position that responds to these dualisms in ways that are both radically challenging and inclusive. The cyborg, as Harraway sees it, is not purely an amalgamation of body and technology; instead it is a subjectivity that is oriented towards its manifold historical, social, and technical environments, which is quite distinct from its current technoscientific and/or technophilic connotations where cyborgs are taken to be the physical manifestations of 'the melding of the organic and the machinic, [encompassing] anyone with an artificial organ, limb or supplement (like a pacemaker); anyone reprogrammed to resist disease (immunized) or drugged to think/behave/feel better (psycho-pharmacology) is technically a cyborg' (2)[293].

The trajectory of the cyborg from a subjective theoretical position to a radically medicalised and technologized physical entity has largely been due to the technology boom from 1960s onwards in the areas of medical sciences and cybernetics[294]. The influx of technology in ordinary everyday life inevitably compelled theorists[295] to contemplate the human condition and human identity under unconventional modes that challenged the rigid constructs of humanism[296] but, in so doing, they gradually dissolved the human in its entirety, facilitating a literal mythmaking of the cyborg with its fetishistic ramifications.

These cyborgic and anti-humanistic identity labels include Hayles's "metaphoric cyborgs" which include: 'the computer keyboarder joined in a cybernetic circuit with the screen, the neurosurgeon

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293 Hables, Chris, Steven Mentor and Heidi J. Figuero Sarriera. "Cyborgology: Constructing the Knowledge of Cybernetic Organisms". In *The Cyborg Handbook*. Pp. 1-14. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.

294 This has been extensively explored in the Introduction of the thesis.

295 For more on this, refer to:

Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight : Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. University of California Press, 1993. Print.

———. *Gender/Body/Knowledge : Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing.* Rutgers University Press, 1989. Print.

Bukatman, Scott. *Terminal Identity : the Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction*. Duke University Press, 1993. Print.

———. *Blade Runner.* British Film Institute, 1997. Print.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter : on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. Routledge, 2011. Print.

———, and NetLibrary, Inc. Undoing Gender. Routledge, 2004. Print.

Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman.* Polity, 2013. Print.

Fukuyama, Francis. *Our Posthuman Future : Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*. Profile, 2002. Print.

Hayles, Katherine. *Chaos Bound : Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science*. Cornell University Press, 1990. Print.

———. *My Mother Was a Computer : Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*. University of Chicago Press, 2005. Print.

———*How We Became Posthuman : Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. University of Chicago Press, 1999. Print.

Moravec, Hans. "Robots, after All: Artificial Minds for Mechanical Bodies Capable of Autonomous Manual Work Finally Seem within Reach." *Communications of the ACM*, vol. 46, no. 10, 2003, p. 90.

———. *Robot Rover Visual Navigation*. UMI Research Press, 1981. Print.

296 This will be explored in subsequent sections.

guided by fiber optic microscopy during an operation, and the teen gameplayer in the local videogame arcade' (322)[297]. This suggests that any human contact with machines automatically makes them a cyborg; and by the same token, people with disabilities who use assistive devices spontaneously turn into "medical cyborgs" or prosthetics, where a single facet of their bodily being is seen to colour their entire personality. Furthermore, commenting on the subjectivity of these new embodied augmentations, Hayles alludes to Bukatman's term "terminal identity", referring to it as an 'unmistakably doubled articulation that signals the end of traditional concepts of identity even as it points toward the cybernetic loop that generates a new kind of subjectivity' (322)[298]. Under this rubric, any kind of technology can herald new subjectivity, which can displace the boundaries of the human body and make it 'increasingly difficult to separate the human from the technological' (2)[299], where the former becomes increasingly virtual and non-conscious. According to Bukatman, 'by de-emphasizing the individual consciousness, and acknowledging the dynamism of our technological unconscious' (298)[300], we can both redefine what it means to be human and anticipate a more hopeful and promising future.

This promise of a new future afforded by technological progress, and the hope of displacing the human (and humanism) has given rise to the advent of unstable identity structures which, despite appearing flexible and inclusive, end up confused, dysphoric, even inescapable: because the concept of the cyborg imposes identity structures that lead to feelings of being ill at ease with oneself. The dysphoric attributes of the cyborg myth are evident in the fetishist configuration of the term "prosthetic" which, as Sobchack fittingly describes, denotes an otherwise mundane and disparate confluence between "a human and an artefact", but which by force of glamour and technophilia 'becomes not an ensemble but [marks] the seeming transference of force or influence from one species of object or event to another' (213)[301]. In its current configurations in these discourses, prosthetic connotes a transference of agency from the human to the prosthesis, to a degree that human agency, consciousness, language and previous identity markers get erased and superseded by prostheses themselves.

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297 Hables, Chris, Mentor, Steven, and Figueroa-Sarriera, Heidi J. *The Cyborg Handbook*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.

298 Ibid,.

299 Bukatman, Scott. *Terminal Identity : The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993. Print.

300 Ibid,.

301 Ibid,.

Such practices have adversely affected the deaf community where the pervasive use of hearing aids, and more advanced cochlear implants[302] has rendered the already marginalised Sign language susceptible to its complete erasure. Children with implants are being increasingly taught to speak and listen rather than sign, and are being segregated from other Deaf children[303]. Moreover, medical practitioners deem Sign language obsolete and impractical once the implants have been attached to the brain of the person. Commenting on the Human Genome Project, Padden remarks:

> Though the scientists do not say so, a related goal of the project must be to eliminate the need for Sign language as well. In the genetic project, Sign languages are seen not as among the thousands of human languages of the world but as an adjustment by or even a by-product of those who do not, but should, have speech. (513)

The future of Sign language has been further threatened by the proliferating automatization of voice and communication technologies which offer oral and written interpretation of Sign language to the Hearing, enabling the Deaf to connect to the internet and make voice calls, sometimes also affording written transcriptions as subtitles. On one hand, these technologies proffer public recognition to Sign language as a valid mode of communication, but on the other hand, such rapid automatization replaces a once private and personal act of voice interpretation executed by a 'a good friend or a relative who knew the Sign language' (Padden 512)[304] with a public charade of depersonalised, robotic and often incorrect modes of interpretation, because on the other side of the webcam is often a computerised interpreter who is liable to make multiple errors. The inconvenience is exacerbated by equally faulty written subtitles as the Sign and written language get muddled in the multi-modal transaction.

These stutters caused by erroneous technology are also pervasive in the current state of implants and hearing aids; irrespective of how developed an implant or a hearing aid may be, they are not without destructive consequences and unpredictable side-effects. This aftermath has been enunciated in the

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302 In the novel *Deaf Sentence*, the protagonist Desmond Bates defines hearing aids as 'an expensive digital device, with little beige plastic earpieces that fits snugly in both ears… which has a program for damping down foreground noises, but at the cost of also damping down background noises and at a certain level of decibels the former completely overwhelms the latter' (4).

Implants are neurological prosthetic aids attached to the skull and cochlear chambers of the implantee. Holston, in his memoir, gives a detailed report on the implantation process as follows: 'the surgeon threads a fine wire festooned with twenty–two tiny transistors into the twisting chambers of the cochlea. The filament attached to a chip, a teensy circuit board, that is placed just inside the skull about an inch above the ear. The outer piece of the implant, the processor, looks and sits on the ear like a hearing aid, but in fact it is a powerful microcomputer that digitises sound waves it receives and transmits them to these micro transistors by way of a coil that attaches like a refrigerator magnet, to the skull directly atop the metal disc inside your head' (60). This is followed by picture illustrations of the latest hearing aids.

303 Padden, Carol A. "Talking Culture: Deaf People and Disability Studies." *PMLA* 120.2 (2005): 508-13. Web.

304 Ibid,.

memoir *Life After Deaf,* in which Holston, after declaring, 'implantation almost always equals destruction' (74), recounts his post-operation experience:

> I couldn't wear my left hearing aid to bed. If I rolled over to my left and pinned it to my pillow, it squealed. The cochlear implant on the other side didn't make that delightful stuck pig sound, but rolling over and dragging it across the pillow case created a magnified scratching like a club DJ working turntable. *Psst–tish, sisk–tish, psst–tish*… And besides fourteen or fifteen hours of having the magnetic cap stuck to your noggin takes a toll. The robotized-sounding voice, the over amplified crash of cabinets doors and cutlery, the roar of white noise at the grocery store – it gets old. The processor seated behind your outer ear light though it is, can still leave the skin feeling rubbed raw and sore. The magnet pinches after a while. You need to detach. You need some quiet. (98)[305]

It would also be an insidious misjudgement to read these machinic errors under the lens of the prosthetic or the cyborg: because, on the one side the erasure of the centrality of the human might render the human actor immediately susceptible to feelings of utter helplessness; and on the other, it might foster the belief that technology offers either miraculous cures or redeeming ease. A glimpse of this is provided in the novel *Deaf Sentence* where Lodge paints a scenario where the protagonist explains the efficacy of hearing aids:

> I get tired of explaining that even the highest tech hearing aids cannot restore my brain's ability to screen out the sounds I don't want to hear from those I do want to hear. And that my hearing impairment is not the kind that can be rectified by implants, but an incurable condition that will gradually get worse, the only uncertainty, as I concluded on this occasion, being whether I shall be totally deaf before I'm totally dead or vice versa. (110)

These experiences, both fictional and autobiographical, bring to the fore that disability does not make one posthuman. In that, it is not a condition that demands people redefine their humanity, or abrogate their status as human. In fact, it is discernible that an abrupt impairment or sensory loss, in foregrounding the pre-reflective givens of one's phenomenal orientations, demands a more strident form of humanism wherein consciousness, autonomy and agency play a pivotal role. In conjunction,

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305 Holston, Noel. *Life After Deaf.* Skyhorse Publishing, 2019. Print.

these portrayals reveal the necessity to position disabilities and AT under the ethos of humanism because the displacement of anthropocentrism from the domain of prostheses will remove disability from its embodied and phenomenological underpinnings and firmly establish a narrative adumbrating hyperfunctionalism and unlimited surgical augmentations of the human form. Beyond this, it will promulgate a perspective that unduly privileges machines as conscious independent entities that would continue to exist irrespective of their human counterpart and function utility.

Posthumanist Disability Studies & the Need for Humanism

In order to instantiate the claim that cyborgism and posthumanism – even in their revised forms – merely cultivate new modes of fetishization, this section shall explore recent scholarship around Posthumanist disability studies. In so doing it demonstrates their incompatibility with an ethical future of disabilities while bringing forth the indispensability of humanism in the formation of disability rights. To commence upon this, let us take a brief look at the basic canons of humanism. Pramod Nayar provides an insightful introduction to the subject as he writes:

> The human is traditionally taken to be a subject (one who is conscious of his/her *self*) marked by rational thinking/intelligence, who is able to plot his/her own course of action depending on his/her needs, desires and wishes, and, as a result of his/her actions, produces history. The human has traditionally been treated as male and universal. It is always treated in the singular (*the* human) and as a set of features or conditions: rationality, authority, authority, autonomy and agency. (5)[306]

Posthumanist disability scholars, in an attempt to redress the shortcomings of traditional forms of humanism, propose novel ways to incorporate and conceptualise the disabled body and its entanglement with technology. Stuart Murray, in his book *Disability and the Posthuman: Bodies, Technology, and Cultural Futures* asserts:

> There are exciting, productive possibilities and subversive potentials in the interactions between disability and posthumanism if we read them as generating sustainable yet radical spaces. Such mobilisations push back against those restrictive humanisms that

306 Nayar, Pramod K. *Posthumanism*. Cambridge: Polity, 2014. Print.

> articulate conformist and restrictive powers of containment and aid the practice of discrimination and prejudice. (6)[307]

Analogous to Murray's argument, Mitchell and Snyder suggest an equally optimistic prospect for a posthumanist disability theory by seeing it as 'an opportunity to provide a substantive theoretical reworking of the repetitive employment of impaired – read: socially marked and biologically determined as undesirable – bodies as diagnostic tools of things gone awry in their social and environmental contexts' (2)[308]. According to them, a push towards poshthumanism will 'recognize that matter itself exerts influence and agency that ultimately outstrips any human ability to deterministically channel its substantiality into false discursive singularities' (3)[309], thereby, making way for a non-unitary one who is too fluid to be categorised as either human or antihuman.

While such posthumanist disability theories may seem justified and rational, on closer observation their advocacy of a fragmented subject is one-sided and its ideological claims, when applied to disability rights, appear misplaced and inadequate. This is because many significant and life changing interventions of disability rights movements have in fact been implemented under a humanist register, mostly stressing autonomy, independence to make choices, human dignity and inclusion. The UNCRPD in its world report on disability lays down the following:

> 1. respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;
> 2. non-discrimination;
> 3. full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
> 4. respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
> 5. equality of opportunity;
> 6. accessibility;
> 7. equality between men and women;

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307 Murray, Stuart. *Disability and the Posthuman: Bodies, Technology, and Cultural Futures*. Liverpool University Press, 2020. *JSTOR,* www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv11qdtsh. Accessed 25 Sept. 2020.

308 Mitchell, David T., et al. *The Matter of Disability : Materiality, Biopolitics, Crip Affect* . University of Michigan Press, 2020.

309 Ibid,.

> 8. respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.[310]

These rights, in contradistinction to those imagined for the posthuman subject, are predicated on preserving the autonomy and identity of people with disabilities. The move against the restrictions posed by humanism should commence with making necessary revisions within it as opposed to implementing radical measures that seek to destroy its legitimacy. It is evident that in endeavouring to revise humanism's subordination of the body, posthumanism has surely gone too far in demonising the anthropocentric impulse, which, instead of castigating the marginalisation and "othering" of people with disabilities, locates them in a space that falls in the "beyond" and "after" of the 'boundaries of a humanist conception of the subject' (Murray 12)[311]. A counterintuitive consequence of this is that disabilities are now being conceived in a fetishist register; that is, disabled embodiments are now deemed as 'transgressive and resistant technologised disabled bod[ies]' (Murray 12)[312]; as "flamboyantly anti- identitarian" (20)[313]; and as encompassing an "undetermined subversive power" (9)[314]. Ironically, such postulations have imputed a heroic and superhuman connotation to people with disabilities which considers their bodily differences as emblems for revolutionary vigour. Posthumanism can therefore be seen to have reduced disabilities to an abstraction that works outside the domain of anthropomorphic attributes like will, consciousness and agency; while at the same time, it has paradoxically anthropomorphised disability technology and tools which have begun to be seen as endowed with rebellious agency, active consciousness and independent will.

Vital Materialisms: Its Flaws and Misrepresentations

This turn to new interpretations of matter has awakened a newfound awareness of our physical and bio-chemical environments as vibrantly alive. This has effected a distinct theoretical corpus called the "Actor-Network-Theory"[315] (ANT), "new materialism"[316], and "vital materialism" [317]. The pioneering

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310For More details visit: World Health Organisation, *World Report on Disability*, 2011, p. 9. www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html. Accessed 24 August 2020.

311 Ibid,.

312 Ibid,.

313 McRuer, Robert. *Crip Times : Disability, Globalization, and Resistance*. NYU Press, 2018. Print.

314 Berger, James. *The Disarticulate : Language, Disability, and the Narratives of Modernity*. NYU Press, 2014. Web.

315 This is Bruno Latour's theory. It will be extensively explored in subsequent sections. For more on this, read:
Latour, Bruno., *Reassembling the Social : An Introduction to Actor-network-theory*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.

316 A comprehensive guide to New Materialism can be found in: Coole, Diana H., and Frost, Samantha. *New Materialisms : Ontology, Agency, and Politics.* Durham [NC]; London: Duke UP, 2010. Print.

317 The term came into prominence when Bennet introduced the notion of animate inorganic matter. For more on this, refer to:
Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter : A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2010. Print.

figure of the new movement was Bruno Latour, who in his famous ANT propounded a novel approach to matter suggesting that matter can function as an "actant": as that which 'is a source of action…which has efficacy, can do things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events. [An actant] is any entity that modifies another entity in a trial; something whose "competence is deduced from [its] performance' (qtd. in Bennet 5). It is evident, that such iterations herald a turn away from precursor dialectical forms of materialism promulgated by Marx, and Hegel who, despite avowing an interrelatedness between body and mind, and/or matter and spirit, still preserved the distinctness between the two.

Latour's radical propositions gained momentum and were subsequently taken up by theorists like Jane Bennett, Diana Coole, and Samantha Frost. In the preface to *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, Diana Coole and Samantha Frost map out what they regard as a paradigmatic shift in our perception of matter:

> For materiality is always something more than "mere" matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable. In sum, new materialists are rediscovering a materiality that materializes, evincing immanent modes of self-transformation that compel us to think of causation in far more complex terms; to recognize that phenomena are caught in a multitude of interlocking systems and forces and to consider anew the location and nature of capacities for agency. Conceiving matter as possessing its own modes of self-transformation, self-organization, and directedness, and thus no longer as simply passive or inert, disturbs the conventional sense that agents are exclusively humans who possess the cognitive abilities, intentionality, and freedom to make autonomous decisions and the corollary presumption that humans have the right or ability to master nature. Instead, the human species is being relocated within a natural environment whose material forces themselves manifest certain agentic capacities...Matter is no longer imagined here as a massive, opaque plenitude but is recognized instead as indeterminate, constantly forming and reforming in unexpected ways. One could conclude, accordingly, that "matter becomes" rather than that "matter is". (9-10)[318].

318 Coole, Diana H., and Frost, Samantha. *New Materialisms : Ontology, Agency, and Politics.* Durham [NC]; London: Duke UP, 2010. Print.

The claims and intentions that the new materialist ontologies seek to make seem simultaneously rational, even ethical and well-meaning, and yet irrational, unthinkingly radical and misleading. On one hand it is perfectly reasonable to revive matter and materiality from the centuries old Cartesian tradition of "mind over matter", that privileges the cognitive/or mental over the material and biological. This mode of understanding is also compatible with endorsing responsible mindfulness of one's physical, socio-political and cultural environment, particularly in the wake of climate change and discriminatory politics; another benefit of new materialism is its challenging of the privileged status of heteronormative bodily orientations, and reorientation towards an empathic accommodation and appreciation of bodily difference and our mutually shared sense of vulnerability. However, as soon as it begins to vouch to displace and replace the human, these promising horizons are eclipsed, even endangered. Targeting the anthropocentric hubris of mastering nature with a dialectical overcoming that completely revokes intentionality and the power of human agency to make informed positive changes not only absolves humanity from fulfilling its obligations towards their larger environment but also ignores the primacy of our phenomenological and embodied embeddedness in the world. This condition has always been mediated through anthropocentric attributes such as 'language, consciousness, subjectivity, agency, mind, soul; also imagination, emotions, values, meaning, and so on' (2-3)[319].

Furthering the notion that matter is an active becoming rather than a static and opaque presence, complicates the relationship between humans and matter (comprising tools, objects, and technology) that is always made and manipulated by the former. It may serve to endorse an absurd outlook suggesting that things are beyond the cognitive reach of individuals and are instantaneously anathematic to and incommensurate with them. The troubling paradox of these arguments is that while they aim to abolish human attributes namely, "bios" (biology), and "logos" (the Word), these assertions concurrently begin the task of anthropomorphising matter. This is evident in Braidotti's description of "Zoe" which she calls:

> This obscenity, this life in me, is intrinsic to my being and yet so much "itself" that it is independent of the will, the demands and expectations of the sovereign consciousness…Zoe carries on relentlessly and gets cast out of the holy precinct of the "me" that demands control and fails to obtain it…Life is experienced as inhuman because it is all too human, obscene because it lives on mindlessly. Are we not baffled

319 Ibid,.

> by this scandal, this wonder, this *zoe*, that is to say, by an idea of life that exuberantly exceeds *bios* and supremely ignores logos? (208)[320]

In contradistinction to Braidotti's phantasmagorical argument that Zoe is 'about the posthuman as becoming animal, becoming other, becoming insect – trespassing all metaphysical boundaries' (208), it turns out be a process in which the non-human, the other, the machinic increasingly become more human. Thus, it is not a metaphysical becoming other, as Braidotti wants us to see, instead it is a process of reversal where machines become human and humans become inanimate machinic assemblages.

Bradottti's idea of the Zoe, as that which falls outside the precincts of the self, will, consciousness, and the bios, in addition to her relentless adherence to this position is problematic in various dimensions for it shows flippant disregard for the crises that will inevitably ensue in adopting this approach. Abrogating the vital importance of will and consciousness in the healing and rehabilitation phase following mental trauma, as well as physical and sensory impairments, is insidious to the prospect of readjustment. In the previous section on Beckett, the indispensability of will and consciousness has been extensively discussed. The hyperreflexivity with which his characters navigate their demanding landscapes with their fragile, disabled bodies, is revealed to be a product of conscious willing and persistence. Were there no will and consciousness, his imaginary worlds would be destitute of trial and error, moving and falling, stasis and advancing, and all the endless progress and failure that is ubiquitous in the works (as analysed in the preceding section). The perpetual sense of becoming that pervades Beckett's works is unlike that which Braidotti's argument conjures – it is not a prosthetic or machinic becoming, rather it is one that aligns with a humanistic idea of eternal " effort and striving", which Spinoza defined as 'the endeavour to persist and flourish in one's own being' (57)[321].

In order to extend the concept of becoming and to align it with posthumanist and materialist critiques of non-anthropocentrism, it is important to consider Jane Bennett's theory of "vibrant matter", and her evaluations of the phenomenon of assemblages and/or becoming. In her work entitled *Vibrant Matter*, she describes an encounter with debris strewn along an alley, when she was:

> struck by "excruciating complexity and intractability" of nonhuman bodies…in being struck, I realised that the capacity of these bodies was not restricted to a passive "intractability" but also included the ability to make things happen, to produce

320 Ibid,.

321 Pinker, Steven. *Enlightenment Now : a Manifesto for Science, Reason, Humanism, and Progress*. Penguin Books Ltd, 2018. Web.

> effects…In this *assemblage*, objects appeared as things, that is, as vivid entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics. (5)[322]

The objects she witnessed, namely: "glove, pollen, rat, cap, stick" (5)[323], commanded 'Thing-Power: the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle' (6)[324]. She then locates the agential capacity of the witnessed assemblage in 'the vitality of the materialities that constitute it' (34)[325]. Granted that Bennett's contention seems convincing, for it is not infrequent for things to become "intractable" and difficult to use. In fact, there are instances when things demand more focus and attention from their human operators in order to be wielded smoothly by them. Hence, Bennett is right in arguing that things are not "passively intractable", but her argument goes astray when she extricates things/objects from their human context, one that is primarily centered around their human purpose and use. It cannot be overlooked that things, irrespective of their complexity, are made by and manufactured for human use. Their historical, socio-cultural, and economic evolutions and configurations are innately located in their utilitarian functionalism and fungibility. Ironically, the pieces of debris that she stumbled upon were also all products and castoffs of human manipulation and agency.

Contemporary theories of new materialist ontologies have extended the notion of "intractability" to miscellaneous objects[326]. But for the purposes of the current enquiry, the focus here will be on prosthetic technologies and their misplaced materialist appropriations. Mark Wigely, for example, in developing a "prosthetic theory" speaks of protheses as independent, autonomous objects which, rather

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322 Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2010. Web.

323 Ibid,.

324 Ibid,.

325 Ibid,.

326 For more on this, refer to:

Brown, Bill. "Thing Theory." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2001, pp. 1–22.

Coole, Diana H., and Frost, Samantha. *New Materialisms : Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Duke University Press, 2010. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Negotiations, 1972-1990.* Columbia University Press, 1995. Print.

Landsberg, Alison. "Prosthetic Memory: Total Recall and Blade Runner." *Body & Society*, vol. 1, no. 3-4, 1995, pp. 175–189.

Latour, Bruno., et al. *Reassembling the Social : an Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press, 2005. Print.

Noë, Alva. *Strange Tools : Art and Human Nature*. First ed., 2015. Print.

Netolicky, Deborah. "Cyborgs, Desiring-Machines, Bodies without Organs, and Westworld: Interrogating Academic Writing and Scholarly Identity." *Kome*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2017, pp. 91–103.

Pickering, Andrew. *The Mangle of Practice : Time, Agency and Science*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. Print.

Smith, Marquard. *The Prosthetic Impulse: from a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*. MIT, 2006. Print.

Wright, Melissa W. "Desire and the Prosthetics of Supervision: A Case of Maquiladora Flexibility." *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2001, pp. 354–373.

Wilson, Robert Rawdon. "Cyber(Body)Parts: Prosthetic Consciousness." *Body & Society*, vol. 1, no. 3-4, 1995, pp. 239–259.

Žižek, Slavoj. *Organs without Bodies : Deleuze and Consequences.* Routledge, 2004. Print.

than being attached to an animate body, are themselves lively attachments that impart both presence and prominence to the frail, structurally deficient embodiment. According to him:

> The prosthesis reconstructs the body, transforming its limits, at once extending it and convoluting its borders. The body itself becomes artifice ... A prosthesis, then, is always architectural. It is always the supplement of a structure – but one that cannot simply be removed. Grafted on to repair some kind of structural flaw, it is a foreign element that reconstructs that which cannot stand up on its own, at once propping up and extending its host. The prosthesis is always structural, establishing the place it appears to be added to. (8-9)[327]

This is a glaring example of theoretically metonymizing prostheses by ascribing to them a kind of uncanny power and autonomy that is entirely independent of its human wielder which in this iteration therefore becomes a "human artefact". Diane Nelson posits a similar take when she writes that prostheses are 'somewhat active participants – not fully synthesizable, not a passive ground, and also not the rational free agent of liberal humanism – but a semi-autonomous prosthetic in intimate connection with the self' (279).[328] These problematic claims are dismissive of the phenomenological and clearly functional attributes of all kinds of prostheses, whose success and availability depend upon how well 'they are phenomenologically incorporated into one's body' (Kurzmann 378)[329]. In further thinking about the processes involving the "phenomenological incorporation" of AT into the human pre-reflective kinetic corpus, the proceeding section shall delve into the literary and biographical depictions of people with wheelchairs, demonstrating that Latour's ANT approach collapses in the wake of ethical and phenomenologically informed anthropocentrism.

Wheelchairs as Actants or Actors?

Wheelchairs are of immense utility for their users, because they provide mobility for people with spinal cord injuries and other physical impairments and aid in improving the quality of life by opening vistas for more autonomy and independence, and reduce the chances of bed sores and other discomforts. However, it remains to be seen, whether in fulfilling such functions, wheelchairs still

327 Wigley, Mark. "Prosthetic Theory: The Disciplining of Architecture." *Assemblage*, no. 15, 1991, pp. 7–29.

328 Nelson, Diane M. *A Finger in the Wound : Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*. University of California Press, 1999. Print.
"Stumped Identities: Body Image, Bodies Politic, and the Mujer Maya as Prosthetic." *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2001, pp. 314–353.

329 Kurzman, Steven L. "Presence and Prosthesis: A Response to Nelson and Wright." *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2001, pp. 374–387.

remain actors, or become actants[330]. These terms are pivotal to Latour's ANT that is glossed as follows: 'an 'actor' in the hyphenated expression actor-network is not the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it' (46). That is, an actor is the receiver of an action; it is that which is acted upon. Analogous to actants, described elsewhere in this chapter, actors can be both human and non-human, but unlike actants, they are neither autonomous, nor coherent, nor imbued with agency. To elaborate the dialectical position of actant and actants, and the place of wheelchairs and its users in the broader rubric of ANT, we shall now look into the Rosellen Brown's novel *Tender Mercies*[331].

Tender Mercies, published in 1978, is Brown's second novel. It renders a poignant account of the protagonists Laura's and Dan's tumultuous relationship following a fatal accident. In the novel, Laura suffers a fatal spinal cord injury as a result of her husband Dan's reckless act of bravado in which he accidentally rams the rotators of a steamboat into Laura's spine. The narrative revolves around Laura's ordeals with readjustment; Dan's failed attempts to provide optimal healthcare to his wife; and the couple's tireless efforts to communicate with each other and re-establish their former relationship. Even the title of the novel has discernible resonances with Beckett's play *Not I (1972)*, in which the ceaselessly voluble Mouth, in its incoherent spiel, raises a plea for "tender mercies" to an unknown and a possibly absent interlocutor. Akin to the uncontrolled outpourings of subjectivity in *Not I*, Laura's and Dan's longings, desires, and resentments can only find an outlet in the free indirect ruminations of their minds where no one is there to listen and react.

There are instances in the novel where Dan finds himself utterly incompetent at handling the equipments attached to Laura. When she asks him to empty her leg bag[332], Dan finds this process more exacting than initially anticipated. He then recalls how:

> At the Institute [in New York], in bright impersonal light, the nurse, Mrs. Toko, has shown him how [to empty Laura]; she called it her Procedure, [and] stressed words like regularity, sterility, turgidity, flexibility…She tried to frighten him into not forgetting

330 "An actant is a source of action that can be either human or nonhuman; it is that which has efficacy, can do things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events. It is "any entity that modifies another entity in a trial; something whose "competence is deduced from [its1 performance" rather than posited in advance of the action" (ibid,.64). This concept will be extensively discussed in the chapter.

331 Brown, Rosellen. *Tender Mercies*. New York: Random House Publishing, 1994. Print.

332 A leg bag is a device that holds urine. It is attached below or above the knee. A leg bag is commonly known as a catheter.

> to help empty Laura out, she never acknowledged how hard it might be, how damn near impossible. “It’s all mechanical. Don’t expect her to feel it”. (19-20)

This suggests how inadequacy of proper information and education on caretaking can adversely impact both the patient and caretaker. In addition, it unearths an outlook towards Laura as a bare mechanical contraption rather than a living and sentient being. She is repeatedly described as a “disconnected person”, as someone who will always be connected “to other systems of support” (55), whose plugs will need to be activated and current pulsed through the wires issuing her commands, ‘to move, to laugh, to pee. “Affirmative,” she’d say [Dan imagined] and move not a single finger’ (55). This passage highlights the muddled relationship that Laura is thought to have with the assortment of devices, here the latter is deemed to be more active and volitional than Laura herself. A Latourian reading of the preceding excerpt would presumably support this hypothesis, suggesting that Laura, in being a paraplegic, is now inevitably a posthuman prosthetic. In this event, Laura not only has to suffer the irretrievable loss of conscious schematic control of her bodily motility but has also to concede her subjectivity to the machines. In this interaction, she is only an actor, the passive recipient of action, someone on whom non-human forces, the real actants, exert their intentions and agential capacities.

Latour lends more clarity to the idea of machinic assemblages (non-human actants) as the origin and primary cause of action when he paints a scenario where we experience the breaking down of a computer and the consequential chain of functional catastrophes this may entail:

> A properly functioning computer could be taken as a good case of a complicated intermediary while a banal conversation may become a terribly complex chain of mediators where passions, opinions, and attitudes bifurcate at every turn. But if it breaks down, a computer may turn into a horrendously complex mediator while a highly sophisticated panel during an academic conference may become a perfectly predictable and uneventful intermediary in rubber stamping a decision made elsewhere. As we slowly discover, it is this constant uncertainty over the intimate nature of entities – are they behaving as intermediaries or as mediators? (39)[333]

This excerpt is illuminating because it introduces two significant concepts signifying for Latour our collaboration with technology. He views this ongoing human and non-human alliance under the shifting substrate of “intermediaries” and “mediators”. He defines the former as being analogous with

333 Latour, Bruno., et al. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press, 2005. Print.

the idea of passive actors, and the latter as being similar to actants, as those elements that trigger action. It is not hard to establish the validity of the claims made by the Latourian theory of actors and actants. He is accurate in pointing out that a functional error in the machines whose smooth operation we most often take-for-granted causes considerable trouble and impediment in the regular functioning of our daily tasks. He is also right in elaborating how the constant interaction between humans and machines is one that is founded upon performativity and functionalism. Notwithstanding this partial validity of Latour's theory, its pitfalls reside in the presupposition that the functional orientation of the actant mediator and actor intermediary is fungible, that is, both the human and non-human actants are endowed with identical forms of performance founded upon agency and competence. For Latour, the anthropocentricism of agency can be intermittently and randomly exchanged by non-human machines, tools and objects.

In his discussion, Latour posits agency as something that induces transformations and causes an action: 'agencies are always presented in an account as doing something, that is, making some difference to a state of affairs' (52)[334]. For him the configurations of this active and conscious agency need not have an embodied human figuration:

> If agency is one thing, its figuration is another. What is doing the action is always provided in the account with some flesh and features that make them have some form or shape, no matter how vague. 'Figuration' is one of those technical terms I need to introduce to break the knee-jerk reactions of 'social explanation' because it is essential to grasp that there exist many more figures than anthropomorphic ones. This is one of the many cases where sociology has to accept to become more abstract. To endow an agency with anonymity gives it exactly as much a figure as when it is endowed with a name, a nose, a voice, or a face. It's just making it *ideo-* instead of *anthropo- morphic*. (53)[335]

Such readings of agency and its non-human "figurations" is problematic on many levels. Firstly, it suggests what Andreas Malm vehemently accuses Latourism of "mysticism and unabashed fetishism" (275)[336]; secondly, it intertwines causality with agency and intentionality, to the extent that the three disparate terms become one. This uncanny hybridism eventually segues into 'a strident current of

334 Ibid,.

335 Ibid,.

336 Malm, Andreas. *The Progress of This Storm : Nature and Society in a Warming World,* 2018.Web.

dissolutionism' (342)[337] yielding ambiguity and misinformation paradoxically touted as "mysticism". Thirdly, in linear progression with the former manifestations, Latourism evokes an overarching practice of "pathetic fallacy"[338]. By fashioning the non-human after the human, it ascribes emotions and conscious reasoning to material objects.

Literary narratives, however, undercut these unfounded assumptions by portraying the human and nonhuman as disjunct entities, despite being in constant collaboration with each other. This is evident in the way Laura, in *Tender Mercies*, drags herself around on the wheelchair in the dining room. Notwithstanding the difficulties and logistical inconveniences, the device causes her, Laura still remains distinct from the metallic contraption in which she is seated. One time, unable to join her family for dinner, because the 'chair does not fit under the kitchen table' (26), she says cheerily:

> I think I am going to lounge around here a few feet back. Laboriously she wheels herself into the corner…Dan knows that all the tables are standard height, and the standard is off a mean fraction by Laura's standards. The machine she sits in is hulking; it gleams, in fact, like the motorcycle of his dreams … She can't even get through the dining room on that goddamn throne. He wonders if she knows that.
>
> [Dan] will dream tonight of taking the nail file to the doorway, and when that fails, using his nose which resembles a vole's, sharper and sharper, and making a net pile of saw dust, like ashes. The life's work of a carpenter ant. (26).

The wheelchair forms an integral part of Laura's and Dan's efforts at rehabilitation and reconciliation, which turn out to be more rigorous than initially anticipated and pose all kinds of challenges to both the patient and her caretaker. This is most conspicuous in the daily rituals of getting dressed, eating breakfast, and so on. Dan meticulously ponders over each and every gesture of his and Laura's to cause the least amount of friction when performing them: 'this time he thinks it out first, carries her chair into the kitchen, picks her up knowing enough to dread the walk down the stairs' (83); 'Dan makes breakfast silently concentrating. There is toast which she can pick up between thumb and forefinger if she raises her hand precisely. Everything depends upon flexors and extensors' (84). Once he contemplates:

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337 Ibid,.

338 A phrase invested my John Ruskin in 1856 to signify any representations of inanimate natural objects that ascribes to them human capabilities, sensations, and emotions." (269). Abrams, M. H., and Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* 10th intl. ed. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012. Print.

> [Laura's] hands are better than some because she wears a strip of plastic for brace… when they rest on the arms of the chair they appear to be at peace, waiting, not heavy with immobility; that broken-winged crippled look shows only in movement. She manages to get the toast up…she manages certain neatness he can barely aspire to, though, with all his limb flexing and extending. (84)

Laura's lived experience as a paraplegic controlling the chair, in conjunction with Dan's subjective perception as her primary caretaker, brings to the fore that the chair is still only an object. It still remains an actor which needs to be manipulated either by Dan, or by Laura's extant functioning muscles. In either scenario, it is the fully conscious human counterparts that actively seek ways of smooth workability around the wheelchair. Even in the face of the obstacles the wheelchair causes, it does not become an active agent imbued with a mystical intentionality.

New Materialism And "Vengeance of Machines"

These instances are useful counterweights to the assumptions of new materialisms and Latourism, the bedrock of which is founded on the emergence of these unintended consequences, where tools and machines fail human calibration and control. Latour describes the eruption of unintended reactions of nonhuman matter as their "vengeance" on their collective human wielders; he attributes these results to the 'unexpected reactions of some agency outside of human action'[339] (133-4). The deconstruction of "unintended consequences" is key in analysing the new materialist notions of action and agency. In the *Philosophy of Action: An Anthology*, action has been outlined in the following ways:

> Can a wave act? Or a computer? If not, why not?' It all depends on whether things may conceivably be settled by that entity in the light of what it thinks and wants. (20)[340]

> There is no action where there is no intentional acting. What distinguishes mere behavior– where things happen but there is no agency– from acting, is that the latter is intentional under at least one description. Acting, that is to say, is 'essentially

339 The book is about anthropogenic climate change; here Latour describes microorganisms and elements like CO2 as non–human agents who "more often come back with a vengeance" (133–4). Latour, Bruno. *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime,* 2017. Web.

340 Helen Steward, 'Moral Responsibility and the Concept of Agency', in Dancy, Jonathan. *Philosophy of Action: An Anthology*. Chichester, West Sussex ; Malden, MA : Wiley Blackwell , 2015. Print.

> intentional'; and in the absence of 'the capacity to act for reasons', there can be no talk of genuine agency. (166)[341]
>
> When we act, our movements are purposive. (19)[342]
>
> An event that merits the title "action" is a person's intentionally doing something. (56)[343]

These iterations, however diverse, do converge on a common understanding that action demands a conscious, thinking and deciding agency. Latour diverges from this trend and delineates action as a non-conscious occurrence. He writes: 'action is not done under the full control of consciousness; action should rather be felt as a node, a knot, and a conglomerate of many surprising sets of agencies that have to be slowly disentangled. It is this venerable source of uncertainty that we wish to render vivid again in the odd expression of actor-network' (44)[344]. Following Latour, the new materialists merge "unintended consequences" with agential action. While it is true that often times things do not operate as intended and unplanned effects materialise, it is nonetheless inaccurate to equate failures in tool use as the intended "vengeance" of non-human actors as it simnply transfers agency from human to object, both conceived as "things".

This pathetic fallacy has camouflaged and distorted the phenomenal struggles that underlie the use of prostheses. The extent of this misrepresentation can be witnessed in the experiences of Christina Crosby and her brother Jeff, both of whom require a wheelchair for mobility. In her memoir *A Body Undone,* she describes her drastically altered physical performance of perfunctory activities and the inconveniences of her own house after her spinal injury. She needs multiple tools and wheelchairs even to get to the bathroom. She recounts:

> We needed help for getting me into a tub, because our only bathroom was on the second floor…To get me to the tub and shower me, Donna had to transfer me from the bed onto my wheelchair, from the wheelchair onto the stair-lift chair that would take me

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341 Frederick Stoutland, 'The Ontology of Social Agency',. in Dancy, Jonathan. *Philosophy of Action: An Anthology*. Chichester, West Sussex ; Malden, MA : Wiley Blackwell , 2015. Print.

342 Harry G. Frankfurt, 'The Problem of Action', in Dancy, Jonathan. *Philosophy of Action: An Anthology*. Chichester, West Sussex ; Malden, MA : Wiley Blackwell , 2015. Print.

343 "Jennifer Hornsby, 'Agency and Actions', in Dancy, Jonathan. *Philosophy of Action: An Anthology*. Chichester, West Sussex ; Malden, MA : Wiley Blackwell , 2015. Print.

344 Latour, Bruno., et al. *Reassembling the Social : an Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press, 2005. Print.

> upstairs, off it and onto a folding wheelchair that was stored in a closet outside bathroom, from that wheelchair onto the shower bench straddling the toilet, and the tub, and finally onto the shower chair in the tub itself. (36)

Crosby's account highlights her altered consciousness of her physicality and immediate environmental space with the fact that the devices and wheelchairs she requires are employed for their usability and accessibility. They are neither agential nor conscious nonhuman agents: they are barely objects of assistance and convenience.

Crosby's brother Jeff, unlike her, is subjected to many technical failures of his wheelchair. Once he comes across a forty-thousand-dollar chair that was developed by a tech engineer in California, 'it was controlled by the pressure of his mouthpiece like a retainer – you would use your tongue to guide it left or right, forward or back' (82). Once the chair has been purchased, it starts to cause problems, 'technical failures limited its use…and the discovery that the signal sent by the mouthpiece interfered with the wireless call system of the hospital strictly limited the hours he could use it anywhere outside his room' (82). Thus, stuck in his room and subjected to the recurring inconveniences of this highly technologized wheelchair, Jeff is hardly the fetishized technophilic cyborgian organism flying high on his wheelchair.

These fictional and autobiographical accounts bring to the fore how the new materialist turn and the proliferation of the term "prosthetic" are vehicles for idiosyncratic fantasy. Even as "unintended consequences" surface, wheelchairs do not become "actants", since they are neither the conscious thinking manipulators of their breakdown, nor are they the source of action, since it is the human operator that wields the controls of the wheelchair irrespective of the latter being manual or automatic. Thus 'the tacit postulate…that intentional human agency terminates at the point where unintended consequences materialise [and] then some other agency takes over, namely that of the entity which causes those consequences' (Malm 179)[345] is challenged in these examples, suggesting that failure in the proper handling of wheelchairs can be either due to machinic error or breakdown (un-usability), or their unsuitability to the environment in which they operate (inaccessibility). But these reactions do not replace the anthropocentricity of wheelchair use and production.

Furthermore, accessibility is not only restricted to the spatial coordination of an AT in its physical

345 Malm, Andreas. *The Progress of This Storm : Nature and Society in a Warming World*. 2018, Web.

surrounding, rather the resonances of accessibility run deeper in the wider socio-cultural milieu, signifying how people with/on wheelchairs are received and looked at in a socially vibrant public setting. These accounts are often obliterated by the posthuman and supercrip ethos. Literary and autobiographical accounts again provide rich sources that reveal comprehensive delineations of the gendered, cripped, and at times condescending and deferential outlooks towards wheelchairs and their occupiers. Crosby recounts her frequent confrontations with the gendered significations of her wheelchair when she writes:

> I no longer have a gender. Rather, I have a wheelchair. I am entirely absorbed in its gestalt. I am now misrecognized as a man more often than ever before, almost every time I go out. I'm not surprised. I know that 82% of spinal cord injuries are suffered by young men, and middle aged butchy women must be statistically negligible in that accounting. Besides, when I'm outside wheeling my chair, I'm belted in…As I sit slumped in the chair, the chair is what you see. That's my distinctive profile. I may have no gender, but the chair does. It's masculine. (61)[346]

In *Tender Mercies*, Brown shows Laura in a similar scenario, where she becomes a captivating spectacle for the onlookers at a grocery store. Their kind reception, accommodation and inclusion of Laura's wheelchair and the likes of her, fills them with righteous pride:

> Laura has wheeled herself around and is stopped near the seeing eye door, looking into its invisible field. The door makes its awful ray gun noise every time anyone goes out. ("Zap, you're sterile!" they used to say; that, and more forbidding variations.) Most of the shoppers smile respectfully and a little proudly at Laura as they go, as if her presence somehow reflects well on them or their town, its tolerance, its ease of movements; something that softens their features the way puppies and children do. (246)

This courteous reception afforded to Laura is in stark contrast with that of Gail Caldwell, who in her memoir, describes her first (and temporary) glimpse at disability after ordering a wheelchair at an airport. She writes:

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346 Crosby, Christina. *A Body Undone*. New York University, 2018. Print.

> At one gate I had to wait half an hour for a prescheduled wheelchair; at the next, the attendant wheeling me through the airport threw my carry on suit case on my lap and treated me like a piece of cargo. I was getting a twenty minute glimpse at real disability, at the depersonalisation and powerlessness that seems to go along with it. (94)[347]

The nuanced depictions of wheelchair use viewed through the lens of phenomenological experience, challenges the Posthuman ethos by providing an anthropocentric, humanistic and individualised stance towards the disabled and AT, where the former retain their human autonomy and agency, while the latter affiliate to their essential qualifications[348] namely: accessibility[349], usability[350] and availability[351]– each calibrated by the embodied and personalised needs, desires and demands of their users.

In *Design Meets Disability (2009)*, Graham Pullin makes a similar observation when he suggests that prostheses must be designed in close collaboration with people with disabilities, medical practitioners, and scholars from diverse disciplines. He emphasises how 'the design issues around disability are underexplored, and demand and deserve far more radical approaches...What is needed is truly interdisciplinary design thinking, combining and blurring design craft with engineering brilliance, therapeutic excellence and the broadest experiences of disabled people' (90)[352]. If such a custom were to be adopted, the resulting products would certainly be more functional, accessible, and economically viable and help to promote better understanding of disability to constitute a non-ableist ethos towards

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347 Caldwell, Gail. *New Life, No Instructions: A Memoir*. Random House New York, 2014. Print.

348 The terms 'usability', 'accessibility', and 'availability', have been prescribed in the United Nations Disability Toolkit as standardised measures for the manufacturing of AT.

349 Accessibility can be understood as the affordances offered by the wider spatial and socio–cultural environment of an individual. It signifies whether an individual can comfortably access and navigate in their wider social and public spaces, in addendum, accessibility also brings to light socio–cultural orientations and receptions of these devices. The UNCRPD349 outlines accessibility as the primal criterion for "*Recognizing* the importance of accessibility to the physical, social, economic and cultural environment, to health and education and to information and communication, in enabling persons with disabilities to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms" (6).

The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 can be accessed here: https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/convtexte.htm.

350 Usability signifies the utility and efficiency of an AT, characterised by the smoothness and ease of operation it provides in carrying out daily activities. The UN accessibility handbook briefly outlines usability as: the ease of use of human-made objects. It is the extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specific goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context. Usability attempts to address limitations or variations in human performance resulting from disability. (4)

The United Nations Toolkit for Disability in Africa . Can be accessed here: https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/disability/Toolkit/CRPD-Trainers-tips.pdf

351Availability denotes the market availability of a particular AT, along with its cost, insurance cover, and even distribution. According to the CRPD: availability refers to whether the products, equipment, facilities or services that are meant to be accessible are actually available… Availability as more a question of the distribution of economic and other resources. The availability of assistive technology will depend on factors such as whether people with disabilities can afford them, whether a responsive market exists and whether an efficient distribution system exists. (ibid. 4).

352 Pullin, Graham. *Design Meets Disability*. Mass: MIT Press, 2009. Web.

embodied differences without attributing facetious assumptions and labels like the "prosthetic". Alison Kafer's suggestion, in *Feminist Queer,* follows a similar line of thought: she remarks how 'it is high time to explore how best to discuss the relationship between disability and cyborgism without facile references to disabled bodies as self-evident cyborgs simply by virtue of their use of "assistive" or "adaptive" technologies' (120).[353] In response to Kafer's argument, this reading suggests that even revised associations between disability, and cyborgism will inevitably devolve into the dialectical realm of fragmentation v/s wholeness; or transform current posthuman object fetishism into posthuman disability fetishism.

Crutches, Sticks, Frames: The Indifferent or Interactive Kinds?

The following section will analyse the implications of Kafer's aforementioned suggestion– on aligning "disability and cyborgism" to perpetuate the production and modelling of efficient ATs – with reference to the representation and configuration of assistive devices such as sticks, crutches and frames, which, as opposed to being automated, are usually more manual by nature. In this they might be regarded as being evidently devices that transform the proprioceptive, spatial and visual configurations of the human body. The question though is whether they also serve to erase or de-emphasise human consciousness or are seen to or experienced as distorting the boundaries separating the human from the technological? Here, Ian Hacking's conception of things and categories as "indifferent" and "interactive" kinds offers useful insights in beginning to explore such questions. Hacking deploys the term "kinds" to identify those entities which are categorised, in conjunction with the traits and characteristics that enable such classifications (104)[354]. To grasp how categories and their constituents interact with each other, he proposes two types of kinds: "the interactive" and "the indifferent"; the former stands for those kinds that are composed of thinking and conscious human subjects, who not only fall under specific categories, but also actively and deliberately interact with and perform them:

> Such kinds (of people and their behaviour) are interactive kinds. This…phrase has the merit of recalling actors, agency and action. The *inter* may suggest the way in which the classification and the individual classified may interact, the way in which the actors may become self-aware as being of a kind, if only because of being treated or institutionalized as of that kind, and so experiencing themselves in that way. (104)[355]

353 Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013. Print.

354 Hacking, Ian. *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard UP, 1999. Print.

355 Ibid,.

The latter construct, called "indifferent kinds", denotes those components and categories which are neither conscious nor self-aware, notwithstanding the fact that they must not be construed as simply static or passive. According to Hacking, they are those objects that are "acted upon" and 'are not aware of how they are classified, and do not interact with their classifications' (107)[356]. The "indifferent kinds" are affected by how humans perceive them, make them, and use them, but they are themselves neither the doers nor the active agents of these changes. It is in this category, that Hacking positions the cyborg, when he observes:

> What about cyborgs? When the word ''Cyborg'' was first introduced (with a capital letter *C*) by two polymaths, Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline (1960/1996), they meant a biological feedback mechanism that was not self-aware, attached potentially to human beings who were self- aware, and who thanks to the Cyborg would be more free to engage in thinking, exploring. Cyborgs were planned to be truly indifferent kinds of things, attached to things of an interactive kind. Science fiction modified the word so that cyborgs became self-aware machine-human compounds. (107)

In charting the evolution of the cyborg and its abrupt leap to the interactive kind, we have yet again confronted the impulse to erase the anthropocentric and to humanise the technological. Hacking, in avoiding this pathetic fallacy, has laid down a theoretical lens that, on the one side, curtails the overreaching fantasies of sci-fi mutually shared by Hayles and Bukatman, while concomitantly beckoning to an understanding of the cyborg that acknowledges both its non-passive and conscious-less nature. Extending the original signification of the term cyborg[357] to the use of crutches and frames, the following section will again engage examples from both fictional and autobiographical texts in order to examine how the human wielder attends to and interacts with these "indifferent" devices. The broader intention behind this enquiry is to suggest that the texts demonstrate a renegotiation of the place of anthropocentrism in the ensuing cyborglike collaborations.

Focussing on Coetzee's novel *Slow Man*[358] (2005), this section will investigate how non-sci-fi genres respond to cyborgism and prostheses. The novel *Slow Man* foregrounds the protagonist Paul Rayment's life post amputation. It can also be read as a psychological case study documenting the self-

356 Ibid,.

357 As **"indifferent"** machinic attachments of the human frame embedded in a bio–looping feedback mechanism.

358 Coetzee, J M. *Slow Man.*, Melbourne, Victoria: The Text Publishing Company, 2005. Print.

conscious remaking of Paul as the eponymous slow man. Right from the outset, Coetzee creates an atmosphere where speed seems to slow down to a degree in which each and every thought, and passing moment is reflected upon with a nervous, an almost ominous, precision. The poignant beginning of the novel sketches the moment of Paul's accident, which renders no detail untouched:

> THE BLOW CATCHES him from the right, sharp and surprising and painful, like a bolt of electricity, lifting him up off the bicycle. Relax! he tells himself as he flies through the air (flies through the air with the greatest of ease!), and indeed he can feel his limbs go obediently slack. Like a cat he tells himself: roll, then spring to your feet, ready for what comes next. The unusual word limber or limbre is on the horizon too.
> That is not quite as it turns out, however. Whether because his legs disobey or because he is for a moment stunned (he hears rather than feels the impact of his skull on the bitumen, distant, wooden, like a mallet-blow), he does not spring to his feet at all, but on the contrary slides metre after metre, on and on, until he is quite lulled by the sliding. He lies stretched out, at peace. It is a glorious morning. The sun's touch is kind. There are worse things than letting oneself go slack, waiting for one's strength to return. In fact there might be worse things than having a quick nap. He closes his eyes; the world tilts beneath him, rotates; he goes absent.
> Once, briefly, he comes back. The body that had flown so lightly through the air has grown ponderous, so ponderous that for the life of him he cannot lift a finger. (1-2)

This excerpt captures what the phenomenologist Husserl calls the "essence" of a phenomenon, in other words, the "what is" and "that is" of experience[359]. This conscious and meticulous recounting of the phenomenal elements of the accident echoes Beckett's poetics of slowness and self-consciousness detailed earlier. In conjunction, it reveals the highly effective opening of the novel, that sets the tone for a self-reflexive phenomenal rendering of Paul's ensuing mental and physical struggle in coping with the loss of his leg; and the frequent reactions he receives for voluntarily rejecting a prosthesis in favour of crutches and frames.

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359 This is a redacted and paraphrased version from the English translation of Husserl's book entitled: *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1967. Print.

This happens when, soon after his amputation, the doctor nonchalantly suggests that Paul will be getting an artificial leg, one which will make up for the non-consensual removal of his actual limb. He remarks: 'Once the surgical wound has healed we will be fitting a prosthesis. Four weeks, maybe even sooner. In no time at all you will be walking again. Riding your bicycle too, if you like. After some training. Other questions?' (15). The excerpt illustrates the indifference with which the doctor treats Paul's amputation and the glaring lack of the latter's consent in the matter. Paul has not even been asked whether or not he wants a prosthetic leg, rather the doctor simply informs him of it. Furthermore, other unsettling repercussions come to the fore namely the perception that an artificial leg will mend the loss of his right leg, that one's relationship with one's body parts, therefore, is entirely functional, and fungible. Underpinning such insensitivity is the lack of an adequate phenomenological framework in medical education which is deeply entrenched in grasping human anatomy at the cost of appreciating the profoundly psychological and phenomenal foundations of embodied being.

Paul's nurse, Marijana's recommendation portrays a similar disdain for his volitional "no" to an artificial leg. One days she asks:

> "You think your leg grow again, Mr Rayment?" she asks one day, out of the blue.
>
> "No, I have never thought so"
>
> "Still, maybe you think so sometimes. Like baby. Baby think, you cut it off, it grow again. Know what I mean? But you are not baby, Mr Rayment. So why don't you want this prostheses? Maybe you shy like a girl, eh? Maybe you think, you walk in street, everybody look at you. That Mr Rayment, he got only one leg! Isn't true. Isn't true. Nobody look at you. You wear prostheses, nobody look at you. Nobody know. Nobody care". (84)

In this brief exchange, we again witness the peremptory dismissal of Paul's opinion. Not only is prosthesis seen as a cure but also as an erasure of his loss. What is remarkable in the conversation is that the author has postulated a different perspective on artificial body parts; by moving the subject from the common substrate of wholeness and lack, Coetzee has positioned it in the zone of visibility and invisibility, between making the choice to show an impairment as opposed to hiding it. In addition to this, the novel also puts forth the dialectics between the artificial and/or virtual and real. This is manifest in Paul's motivation behind refusing the prosthetic leg. He contemplates:

> But if this fleshly object is repulsive, how much more so a leg moulded out of pink plastic with a hinge at the top and a shoe at the bottom, an apparatus that you strap yourself to in the morning and unstrap yourself from at night and drop on the floor, shoe and all! He shudders at the thought of it; he wants nothing to do with it. Crutches are better. Crutches are at least honest. (79)

In this excerpt, Paul envisions himself in a flesh toned artificial limb attached directly to his stump ("the fleshy object") and he finds the prospect disgusting. The uncanny image of a melange of flesh and metal makes it psychologically revolting for him to accept a replacement. The seemingly cofounding boundaries between artificial and real are daunting for Paul because the shock and transformation that his body has gone through post amputation have severely affected his body image. In the novel, he is a middle-aged man and one therefore phenomenologically attuned to having a biological leg; the swift transition to a cork and screw attachment as a recommended cure will inevitably be a difficult transition. Paul's mental turmoil suggests that the "cyborg myth" and the idea of a "terminal identity" are misplaced, and even Kafer's proposal to intermingle disability with cyborgism will eventually lead to the erasure of individual experiences of disabilities, in turn endorsing a practice of cure and erasure at the expense of human care. It is the latter that Paul needs much more, and his excessive dependency on his nurse Marijana arises from the belief that she 'promised no cure, just care' (85).

Paul has an analogous expectation towards his assistive devices; the crutches and walker are there to provide him with mobility and balance, to be used for support, not cure. Notwithstanding this, his AT demands his attention, careful planning and practise. With steady use, he becomes more attuned to his crutches and walker, gradually adapting them to his habitual proprioceptive repertoire: 'the crutches are becoming second nature, though he feels more secure leaning on the frame' (50) – but this process encounters obstacles when tried with different scenarios and spaces. This is apparent, for example, when Paul is about to embark on a sexual encounter with Marianna, a blind woman: the experience is fraught with spatial restrictions and barriers posed by his physical limitations and the crutches: 'to embrace her he must put aside the absurd crutches that allow him to stand up; and once he does that he will totter, perhaps fall' (101). No sooner does Paul deal with this obstacle than he is faced with another which is that 'it occurs to him that the frame might be taken for a barrier…He puts it aside and lowers himself onto the sofa' (135). It is obvious that these impediments compel Paul to be more attentive to and aware of his prosthetic aids, which at this juncture correspond to what Alva Noe calls "strange tools." He observes: 'design stops and art begins when we lose the possibility of taking the

background of our familiar technologies for granted, when we can no longer take for granted what is, in fact, a precondition of the very natural-seeming intelligibility of such things as doorknobs and pictures. Art starts when things get strange' (109).[360]

Noe's "strange tools" are ambiguous technological artefacts that frustrate intelligibility and invite the attention of an onlooker. Although his thesis is specifically concerned with the making of works of art, it nonetheless bears on the use of AT which so often escapes the epistemological givens of its human operator/s, maker/s and user/s. This is nuanced in the novel *Slow Man*, when Paul experiences a tremendous fall while taking a shower when his Zimmer frame (walker) "slips sideways" causing him to dash his head against the wall. In the accident that follows, Paul lands on the floor trapped and entangled under the frame, almost impossible to free himself. Under immense physical and mental duress, Paul contemplates the origin and invention of his frame and its domineering presence in his life. He meditates:

> No one bothered to inform him, and he did not think to ask, who the Zimmer is or was who has come to play such a role in his life. For his own convenience he has imagined Zimmer as a thin-faced, tight-lipped figure of a man, dressed in the high collar and stock of the 1830s.
>
> Now here he is on the tiled floor, naked, immobile, with Zimmer's invention on top of him blocking the cubicle door, while water continues to pour down and leaking shampoo rises in a froth all around and the stump, which has taken a knock on its on its tender end, begins to throb with its own, unique variety of pain. (268)

At this juncture, Paul fathoms the strangeness of the walker as he experiences his own physical ineptitude combined with the alienating effects of the Zimmer frame; in this moment, the latter becomes a "strange tool" for him. The accident with the frame compels Paul to concoct an epistemological background to the object. This gestures towards Noe's thesis expounding the significance of failure in the making of art, that 'failure is one of art's most important channels of investigation, something that would make no sense at all if artists were simply technologists, if they were just makers' (29)[361]. While this reading is not attempting to argue that Paul's falling is resonant with the making of art, or that the Zimmer is itself a work of art, it is however arguing for the integral

360 Noë, Alva. *Strange Tool : Art and Human Nature*. New York: Hill and Wang, First ed. 2015. Print.

361 Noë, Alva. *Strange Tools : Art and Human Nature*. First ed. 2015. Print. 361 Noë, Alva. *Strange Tool : Art and Human Nature*. New York: Hill and Wang, First ed. 2015. Print.

importance of failure and the actualisation of "unintended consequences" because these events reveal that human vulnerability and unintelligibility are not incompatible with human agency and intentionality.

Noe's idea that the occasions uncovering the strangeness of tools, albeit demanding more human effort and concentration, do not impart agency to the work of art, is commensurate with Hacking's proposition detailing the interaction of the "indifferent kinds" with their conscious and self-aware counterparts, the "interactive kinds". In the example quoted above, it is the self-conscious and thinking Paul who acts upon the Zimmer frame and imparts to it a fictitious chronicity. Unlike a Latourian understanding of actants, the walker is a "non-passive", and an "indifferent natural kind" whose mysteriousness, as opposed to being a consciously planned facet, is a product of anthropocentric unintelligibility and incomprehension. The instances of failure and ineptitude, actualising the unrecognised elements of "indifferent kinds" also stimulates curiosity, wonder and learning. A glimpse of these can be witnessed in Caldwell's delineation of her initial experiences with walking on crutches. She feels that her perception of height coupled with her proprioceptive awareness of the world had altered. She notes:

> My first tip off that the world had shifted was that the dogs looked lower to the ground. I dismissed the perception as a visual misread: Because I was on crutches and couldn't bend over to touch them, of course they would seem farther. Then a friend came to visit, a striking woman whom I'd always considered tall. She was standing across the living room…and I thought, Tink is small! And I never realised it before. The fact is that she is about my size, but until that day I had looked up to her in more ways than one. (5)

These descriptions critique the new materialist theories by highlighting that objects are functional and non-agential. Their purpose resides in offering affordances to the users who learn to manipulate them by fits and starts. In Caldwell's case, for instance, it took her 'days of inpatient therapy [to learn] how to manoeuvre crutches' (10). Notwithstanding the fact that the process of inpatient therapy validates Bennett's argument that things are "intractable" and unapproachable, it does not however justify the claim that in so being things exceed their inanimate nature. In arguing for the anthropocentric precepts of technology and matter, this study is by no means overlooking the "non-passive" attributes of the latter but, instead of adopting a fetishist framework of "thing power", it is advocating for the kind of phenomenological reading of things proposed by Merleau-Ponty.

In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty explicates the essential nature ("sense") of things, which resides in their physical structural orientations. According to him, the thing-human interface is a matter of sensory and embodied behaviour: in that the latter interrogates the things present to him or her with the aid of perceptual signs and significations exuded by "the thing-in-itself"[362]. He illustrates this as follows:

> Heat is given in experience as a sort of vibration of the thing, colour in turn is given as the going outside of itself, and it is a priori necessary that an extremely hot object turns red, for the excess of its vibration causes it to shine. The unfolding of sensible givens beneath our gaze or beneath our hands is like a language that teaches itself, where signification would be secreted by the very structure of signs, and this is why it can be said that our senses literally interrogate the things and that the things respond to them. (333)[363]

This analogy delineates how things inhabit and emanate a priori signs which we need to actively explore. In so being, things are a revelation, whose absorption is dependent upon 'a new behaviour that is not through an intellectual operation of subsumption, but rather [through] taking up for ourselves the mode of existence that the observable signs sketch out before us' (333)[364]. Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, it is the human interface that transfigures the "thing-in-itself" into the "thing-for-itself". The paradox inherent in the two-fold interaction is that of "immanence" and "transcendence": 'immanence because the perceived object cannot be foreign to him who perceives' (60)[365], that is, the thing-in-itself is already there in the world even before it becomes part of the proximate surroundings of an individual. On the other hand, it is "transcendent" because the thing 'always contains something more than what is actually given' (60)[366], in so being, it is a 'correlate of [the] knowing body' while at the same time it also 'denies this body' (339).

Under the lenses provided by Merleau-Ponty and Hacking, things configure a phenomenological and non-passive becoming perpetually entrenched in "biofeedback", "biolooping", and "classificatory looping" mechanisms[367]. A stark example of the emergence and entwinement of the said mechanisms

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362 The state when things exist in isolation and we do not know what to do with them. According to Ponty: "The thing is presented as a thing in itself even to the person who perceives it, and thereby poses the problem of a genuine in-itself- for-us" (336).
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962. Print.

363 Ibid,.

364 Ibid,.

365 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Primacy of Perception : And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics*. Evanston, Ill.]: Northwestern UP, 1964. Print.

366 Ibid,.

367 All three processes have been discussed by Ian Hacking in *The Social Construction of What.* All three to be elaborated in this section.

is patterned in the use of walking sticks/canes. Merleau-Ponty delineates a blindman's use of his cane as an instance where the latter participates as a replacement and an extension of the lost sight and length of his arm. He affirms:

> The blind man's cane has ceased to be an object for him, it is no longer perceived for itself; rather, the cane's furthest point is transformed into a sensitive zone, it increases the scope and the radius of the act of touching and has become analogous to a gaze. In the exploration of objects, the length of the cane does not explicitly intervene nor act as a middle term: the blind man knows its length by the position of the objects, rather than the position of the objects through the cane's length. The position of objects is given immediately by the scope of the gesture that reaches them and in which, beyond the potential extension of the arm, the radius of action of the cane is included. (144)[368]

Merleau Ponty's phenomenological account brings to the fore how the cane, in assuming a non-passive character, acts as an information provider to the blindman and is his primary conduit to navigating and haptically connecting with the world. It is worth examining here that the stick, despite being endowed with multiple modalities, is not conscious of being so; moreover, it is only metaphorically supplanting the sight and arm. Yet again, the stick is only fulfilling its functional role without consciously planning to do so. It is at this juncture that "biofeedback" and "bio-looping" mechanisms activate.

Hacking defines the former as those organic processes that are under the conscious control and awareness of an individual: he calls this the "body/mind effect" (109-110)[369]. This is apparent in the passage quoted, which concludes that it is still the blind man who is consciously and wilfully wielding the stick, and receiving and processing the information. However integral the stick may be, it can never completely replace the embodied and anthropocentric significations of being. Turning once again to fiction to further illustrate this observation, a manifestation of it occurs in James Kelman's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *How Late it was, How Late (*1994*)*[370], which portrays the violent and sudden onset of blindness, affecting the hero Sammy, and subsequently entrapping him in the bureaucratic procedure of getting disability benefits. Kelman deploys a captivating metaphor of "pat-a-caking" to

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368 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962. Print.

369 Hacking exemplifies it as "the way in which the master of yoga brings the heart to a virtual standstill" (110)

Hacking, Ian. *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge, Mass. London: Harvard UP, 1999. Print.

370 Kelman, James. *How Late It Was How Late*. S.l.: Vintage, 2019. Print.

describe his blind protagonist's tactile engagement with his environment, thereby establishing how navigating the world can become a dynamic and an interactive exploration. This metaphor emerges in the first moments of the protagonist's blindness, when he exits the police station and makes his way home:

> He poked his foot forwards to the right and to the left…down the steps sideways and turning right, his hands around the wall step by step, reminding ye of pat-a-cake game ye play when ye're a wean, slapping your hands on top of each other then speeding up. (33)

His efforts to reacquaint himself with his changed sensory apparatus and the immediate environment show his embeddedness in the given world, where he orients himself while simultaneously etching out a separate space in it. This action is indeed more similar to the synchronic, rhythmic and collaborative aspects of pat-a-caking than it is to the imposing, one-sided, desperate act of groping.

Sammy's account parallels that of Professor Hull, who documented his experience of gradual sight loss in a 1983 auto-diary *Notes on Blindness*[371]. He asserts, 'you have to learn everything again' (57). To this end, he slowly pat-a-cakes the doors, walls, furniture of his house; he counts the steps from house to work to his class. The touch of the bannister lets him know that he is on the path to his classroom. Through these rituals of touch, he establishes 'linearity, predictability, same objects, same movement, a steady environment'. But pat-a-caking does not only grant familiarity to Professor Hull, it also provides him with 'a new horizon, and new ideas', as it opens new contours of the world to him where echoes and spaces become sharper and assume novel connotations.

Furthermore, pat-a-caking is a shining manifestation of the "biolooping" mechanism, which, by definition, comprises those scenarios in which conscious and self-aware actors or "interactive kinds" establish contact with non-conscious "indifferent kinds", (like– tool and machines, and abstract classifications) to form a dynamic looping effect (Hacking 101)[372]. This interaction between the conscious human actors and the non-conscious and abstract kinds enables the former to come to terms with the prejudices inherent in their classification, and to 'take some control over their own destiny'

371 Hull, John M. *Notes on Blindness: A Journey Through the Dark*, 2017. Print.

372 Ibid,.

(58)[373] by entirely changing the nature of those categorisations. Thereby, it can be said that biolooping is endowed with the potential of "unmasking"[374] the prejudices intrinsic in the broader categorisation of sticks as proxy eyesight and of "groping" as the singular channel for maintaining tactile communication following blindness.

As an addendum to this, it might be observed that the pervasive outlook towards blindness has granted a theoretical metaphorisation to sticks, where they are deemed to be inextricable tools that accessorise and authorise blindness while concomitantly supplying visual social cues. Sammy's agitation at not wielding a stick substantiates this claim; one time he ponders that he needs help, but 'what kind of help; the fare for a taxi, a bus. A couple of fags. A stick. A stick would show people the situation. A white stick [was not] necessary. Just any stick' (38). The stick, in this context unarguably bears cultural and social connotations, but it still remains an indifferent kind, for it is neither accountable for nor aware of these significations. In so being, sticks too are akin to other ATs explored in this subsection, that is – despite having a purpose in a person's everyday life – crutches, frames and sticks are still indifferent and non-agential entities. It can therefore be said that "unmasking" deliberate misinformation entrenched in new materialist understandings of prosthetics demands a twofold approach: one, that human actors be conceived as the steering forces of action; two, that ATs do not exceed the contours of accessibility, usability and availability.

Hip Replacements, & Hearing Aids: The Mangle of Resistance and Accommodation

Hitherto the chapter has explored the allocation of autonomy to material objects from diverse theoretical perspectives, commencing with Bennett's, and Latour's non-dialectical standpoints which avow a diminution if not total obliteration of human agency, and stretching towards Malm's, Noe's, Merleau-Ponty's and Hacking's more dialectical observations, which nevertheless acknowledge both the non-passivity and non-agentiality of things. These observations were brought to light and tested against various literary and biographical delineations of detachable ATs such as wheelchairs, crutches, frames, and sticks. Unlike permanent and invisible attachments or fixtures such as artificial hips and hearing aids for example, such tools function as essential assistive augmentations of one's embodiment. In so being, they extend the proprioceptive contours of their users without becoming irrevocably aligned with them. However, hearing aids and artificial hips complicate the site of agency

373 Ibid,.

374 Hacking puts this idea as an "unmasking" as that which does away with the extra–theoretical inaccuracies of given ideas. (ibid 58-59)

and autonomy even further. By virtue of being perpetually rivetted to the body, these devices disrupt clear-cut physical boundaries between things and humans, but, whether they also disrupt and dissolve an affiliation to a human identity and autonomy, and/or if they intermingle human and material agency to generate a shared and reciprocal autonomy, is yet to be answered. With these questions as the point of departure, the following section will examine the depictions of hip joints and hearing aids under the lens of Andy Pickering's idea of the posthuman adaptation that he refers to as the "mangle of practice"[375].

Pickering's "mangle" denotes the performative side of science, where human and material agencies intertwine and promulgate an ever evolving culture of science. He writes that in a scientific culture, both human and material agencies constitute a reciprocal relationship and that each of these is equally consequential. Broadening this evaluation, Pickering observes:

> My basic image of science is a performative one, in which the performances – the doings – of human and material agency come to the fore. Scientists are human agents in a field of material agency which they struggle to capture in machines. Further, human and material agency are reciprocally and emergently intertwined in this struggle. Their contours emerge in the temporality of practice and are definitional of and sustain one another…The upshot of this process is, on occasion, the reconfiguration and extension of scientific culture – the construction and interactive stabilization of new machines and the disciplined human performances and relations that accompany them. (21)[376]

Pickering conceptualises the active interaction between machines and human in the dialectical domain of "resistance" and "accommodation" marking a process in which human and material performances are intermittently punctuated by activity and passivity. By way of deploying personifications and metaphors, Pickering elucidates upon the dual and parallel constructs– of resistances and accommodations – as a "dance of agency" and a "tuning". The former is defined as follows:

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375 For more– Pickering, Andrew. "The Mangle of Practice: Agency and Emergence in the Sociology of Science." *American Journal of Sociology* 99.3 (1993): 559-89. Web. Pickering, Andrew. *The Mangle of Practice : Time, Agency and Science*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1995. Print.

376 Pickering, Andrew. *The Mangle of Practice : Time, Agency and Science*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1995. Print.

> The dance of agency, seen asymmetrically from the human end, thus takes the form of a *dialectic of resistance and accommodation*, where resistance denotes the failure to achieve an intended capture of agency in practice, and accommodation an active human strategy of response to resistance, which can include revisions to goals and intentions as well as to the material form of the machine in question and to the human frame of gestures and social relations that surround it. (22)[377]

The subsequent revisions in the goals and objectives of scientific study to counteract or respond to machinic resistances give rise to what Pickering calls "tuning" where not only human intentions, but also the positioning, form and function of machines, undergo drastic changes. Pickering notes:

> The contours of material agency are never decisively known in advance, scientists continually have to explore them in their work, problems always arise and have to be solved in the development of, say, new machines. And such solutions – if they are found at all – take the form, at minimum, of a kind of delicate material positioning or tuning, where I use "tuning" in the sense of tuning a radio set or car engine, with the caveat that the character of the "signal" is not known in advance in scientific research. (14)[378]

Tuning is the unpredictability of outcome that ensues from the dialectical play – of resistance and accommodation – in the arena of human and machinic intentionality. Pickering's dialectical approach appears to be positioned somewhere between the Latourian nondialectical semiotics of actants and actors[379] and Hacking's dialectics of "indifferent and interactive kinds"[380]. The points of convergence and divergence between Pickering's propositions and that of the other two theories lies in the conceptualisation of "intentionality". Under Pickering's "mangle", human and machinic intentionality are of a divergent character, in that he delimits the former as encompassing "specific plans and goals", and is thus temporally determined [381]; while, in contradistinction, he denotes the latter to be unplanned, wild, devoid of consciousness and temporally spontaneous. Given this breakdown, Pickering then

377 Ibid,.

378 Ibid,.

379 Previously discussed under the subsection, "Wheelchairs: Actors or Actants?".

380 Previously discussed under the subsection, "Crutches, Sticks, Frames: The Indifferent or Interactive kinds?" 8

381Pickering, Andrew. *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency and Science.* Chicago: U of Chicago, 1995. Print.

elaborates the alignment of human and material intentionality by stressing the significance of temporal emergence in scientific experiments. He writes:

> If one defines intentionality in terms of human plans and goals, the questions that arise concern the origin and substance of such goals, and here traditional studies of science already offer an answer. The goals of scientific practice are imaginatively transformed versions of its present. The future states of scientific culture at which practice aims are constructed from existing culture in a process of *modelling*. (21)[382]

Further elucidating the nature of modelling, Pickering remarks that the function and design of future machines evolves from that of present ones from which 'an indefinite number of future variants can be constructed' (19). This process is neither predetermined nor goal oriented, for 'there is no algorithm that determines the vectors of cultural extension, which is as much as to say that the goals of scientific practice emerge in the real time of practice' (19). Building upon this suggestion, Pickering calls for a 'reciprocal tuning of machines and disciplined human performance', where two separate intentionalities are "constitutively engaged" with each other. This continual modification of human goals, catalysed 'in the struggles with material agency' (20), is enacted in the intermittent reversal and exchange of 'periods of activity and passivity' between humans and machines in which, 'as active, intentional beings, scientists tentatively construct some new machine. They then adopt a passive role, monitoring the performance of the machine' (22). Pickering attributes 'this period of human passivity' as instituting 'a temporal and posthumanist interplay' (56), in which 'material agency actively manifests itself' (21-22).

As observed thus far, it can be upheld that the precepts of the "mangle" encompass a bridge between Latour's "Actor Network Theory" and Hacking's "biofeedback looping," for it refutes the former's subsumption and erasure of human agency and intentionality, and avows instead a divergent and individualised nature of machinic agency which differs from the "non-passivity " and indifference of the latter's cyborg. Consequently, Pickering's posthumanism seems like a nuanced intervention in which "the performative idiom" of the "mangle" not only contravenes the new materialist impositions, stating the 'equivalence and *interchangeability* between the human and material realms' (15), but also 'subverts the black-and-white distinctions of humanism/antihumanism and moves into a *posthumanist* space, a space in which the human actors are still there but now inextricably entangled with the nonhuman, no longer at the center of the action and calling the shots' (26). The undeniable pertinence

382 Ibid,.

of the "mangle" is manifest in machines that are attached to human embodiment in ways that do echo, in the very least, the decentering – if not absolute elimination – of the "human actors".

This is discernible in Patrick McGrath's gothic romance novel *Dr Haggard's Disease* (1993), where the eponymous protagonist suffers from sporadic bouts of pain and discomfort emanating from his artificial hip joint/pin, which he names Spike. The novel is suffused with occasions in which the protagonist's references to the hip joint as Spike conjure up vehement personifications in which the latter configures as a separate yet an inseparable entity demanding constant care and attention. The looming presence and perpetual awareness of Spike in Dr Haggard's consciousness is evident in his routine strolls to the beach:

> That spring I discovered a method of managing the wooden staircase down the cliff that Spike seemingly could tolerate. It involved leading with the good leg, descending sideways and making frequent stops. It was time consuming, tiring and uncomfortable, but it was worth it:…there was a flat rock I liked to sit on to smoke a cigarette…and stretch out the bad leg, and give Spike a rest…I wouldn't go back the way I'd come, but by the path that ascended fairly gently to the road…Though Spike would make me pay for my exertions. the evening would find me in severe pain in the gloom of the surgery. (57)[383]

Analogous to the performative side of the mangle, this excerpt brings to the fore the intermingling of the human with the non-human actors, the indistinct contours of which encompass the dialectics of resistance and accommodation. It is apparent that the hurdles posed by Spike are incorporated in the embodiment and consciousness of Dr Haggard, who makes sufficient physical adjustments to its demands. Moreover, the pathetic fallacy imbued in the latter's allusions to the hip joint does seem to impart an active agential and human character to it, thereby culminating in an instantiation of Pickering's posthumanist suppositions.

However forceful these claims may appear, their disintegration can be mapped by bringing to light that the resistances were not posed and manufactured by the pin but rather it is the body that is being reactive and resistant to the replaced joint. In this, the obstacles posed by Spike ensure that the pin is phenomenologically inaccessible and/or opaque to Dr Haggard. Thus, instead of gesturing to a posthumanist appraisal of technology, the resistance and accommodations evident in the

383 McGrath, Patrick. *Dr Haggard's Disease*. London: Penguin, 1994. Print.

aforementioned citation bring to the fore an embodied understanding of failure and hypereflexivity[384] as integral constituents of rehabilitation. Furthermore, it shows that human fallibility is fundamental – not anathema – to human agency and intentionality, for its absence results in supercripping where disability is perceived to be a crippling misfortune on one side and a fetishist overcoming on the other. This yet again counters Kafer's proposal cited earlier in the chapter,[385] for it shows that in the wake of extant posthuman materialism, the convergence of "disability and cyborgism" will inevitably reap insidious discourses declaring either hyper-functionalism, or an active and tyrannical materialism.

The christening of the hip joint as Spike, understood within an anthropocentric and a phenomenological scaffolding reveals its excruciating nature because the word itself signifies a sharp, and sporadic jab of pain. Accordingly, the hip joint rather than being an active material agency, is an uncomfortable and inaccessible device that, instead of de-centering the human actor, brings continual attention to itself as a defective instrument that needs to be remodelled or replaced. In this it is still the active and goal oriented human actor who decides the necessary changes to be made in the overall design of the joints, thus, contra Pickering's claim – that modelling entails a mutual and reciprocal revolution in human goals with that of machines – this reading argues that in the case of AT and prosthetics, the human goal is always territorialised within usability, accessibility and availability. It is the machines that change and evolve in the service of these goals.

Pickering's observation, with regards to the "mangle" being an unpredictable emergence, where scientific material culture and human goals co-evolve with time and practice, can be substantiated by the rapidly evolving nature of TAs, where cosmetology, torque[386] and phenomenology are gaining prominence. Nonetheless, this progress has been determined by cultural events, and collective and individualised human goals, rather than simply an active and determining material agency. As Katherine Ott remarks, 'if the history of prosthetics is about the history of medicine and technology, it is also about learning strategies to live with one's own body and adapt to circumstances, learning to understand other people's bodies…These intimate aspects of the history of prosthesis lie buried in the compost of cultural events as wars, economic shifts, and political changes' (25-26)[387].

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384 Expansively discussed in chapter one of the thesis.

385 Kafer's remarks "it is high time to explore how best to discuss the relationship between disability and cyborgism without facile references to disabled bodies as self-evident cyborgs simply by virtue of their use of 'assistive' or 'adaptive' technologies" (120).

386 For more information, refer: Serlin, David. *Replaceable You : Engineering the Body in Postwar America*. Chicago ; London: U of Chicago, 2004. Print.

Ott, Katherine., Serlin, David, and Mihm, Stephen. *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives : Modern Histories of Prosthetics.* New York: New York UP, 2002. Print..

387 Ott, Katherine., Serlin, David, and Mihm, Stephen. *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives : Modern Histories of Prosthetics*. New York: New York UP, 2002. Print.

In correspondence with the latter part of Ott's observation, this study argues for establishing the anthropocentric factors that influence the technological evolution of prosthetics, claiming that material culture is deeply embedded in, and shaped and influenced by contemporary human culture. In this regard, even the processes of "framing" and "transcription"[388] are radically anthropocentric rather than anthropomorphic. This is evident in the fictional and auto-biographical portrayals of hip joints in McGrath's and Caldwell's works respectively. In what follows, the two types of experiences will be compared and contrasted. In Caldwell's account, upon her homecoming from a hip replacement surgery, she has had to resort to an array of equipment: 'a shower chair…a raised toilet, a walker… exercise instructions in every room, crutches, canes, and seven gel pack in the freezer' (107). She recounts her rehabilitation process whereupon she realises:

> The way my brain accepted so much new information. I remember thrusting my foot up and outward the first morning, trying to accommodate the feeling of the longer floppy limb…I couldn't limp the old way even if I'd wanted to; there was too much leg there now.
>
> The length Dr Mattingly had gained in rebuilding my hip only hinted at my uprightness in the world, an ease and agency I glimpsed but couldn't believe…I didn't know yet that all the rest of my leg would have to play a long and painful catch up – that nerves, and muscles, and tendons and ligaments would have to stretch, tear and readjust. (118)

In the fictional account, Dr Haggard details his adaptation to the hip joint as such:

> A broken hip is straight forward. You open it up, dissect away the muscle, and bang in a steel pin, it's called a Smith-Peterson, and it holds the broken ends together. During cold weather, or when I'm tired, or if I've been on my feet too long, it'll produce inflammation in the femuro-pelvic joint, where the neck of the thighbone fits into the pelvis. Then it hurts like a devil, and that's when I need a shot of morphia to keep me cheerful – you know how I am like when Spike's not behaving. (McGrath 120)

These commensurate accounts reveal readjustment to a new hip, and also gesture to the process of "framing", which Pickering describes as the moment which signals the performative role of material agency. At this juncture 'discipline asserts itself…[thereby making] scientists…passive in the face of

388 To be discussed in this section. For more information check:
Pickering, Andrew. *The Mangle of Practice : Time, Agency and Science*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1995. Print.

their training and established procedures' (116). It is here that human actors surrender their agency to execute "passive, forced moves" in accordance with the dictates of non-human material/ machinic agency denoting the onset of "transcription" and dissolving the free moves of human actors into "disciplined, machinelike human agency" (139). It is discernible that both Caldwell and Dr Haggard make drastic mind/ body adjustments to phenomenologically assimilate the hip joint. The perpetual relearning and excessive concentration divested in the appendage institutes a disciplined form of agency, "interactively stabilised"[389] by constant human-machine collaboration; nonetheless, contra Pickering, these moves are neither forced nor passive nor machinelike. In fact, they are willingly undertaken in the case of Caldwell, who finds a renewed sense of agency in her newly gained motility. In so being, neither of them surrenders agency to the machinic counterpart; rather in the latter case, Dr Haggard not only continually attempts to understand and attend to the "resistances" and limitations evoked by his body and Spike, but also devises ways to ameliorate the pain. Under Pickering's posthumanist framework, morphine too would assume an active agential role, thereby conceiving pain relief as an act of machinelike human performance.

In juxtaposition with each other, an anthropocentric and a humanist reading of the same situation would impart a wholly different perspective, affirming that the process of rehabilitation, although not devoid of things and tools, is still an anthropocentric endeavour. This is evident in the fact that the multiple devices and tools that both Caldwell and Dr Haggard have recourse to bear functional purpose, in that they have been made and manufactured to serve a human end. This, in turn, manifests that human actors are by themselves incomplete and vulnerable and therefore need a material scaffolding of non-human material collaborators to lead an efficient and affective life. By virtue of this, material things, rather than gaining an active agential role, assume an affective significance entailing one's integration of affordances and collaborations with one's interpersonal material environment, comprising other people, things, spaces and places[390].

The significance of the material scaffolding of the self is best exemplified in the use of hearing aids, which in some cases may not always augment and correct the loss of auditory faculty, but facilitate in hiding the social shame attached to deafness. This is exemplified in Greenberg's fiction, *In This Sign*

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389 Pickering, Andrew. *The Mangle of Practice : Time, Agency and Science.* Chicago: U of Chicago, 1995. Print.

390 Joel Kreuger, in "Schizophrenia and the Scaffolded Self", introduces the idea of a threefold "affective scaffolding" where an individual forms "beyond the brain" collaborations and affordances with their interpersonal environment, comprising: embodied, social and material extensions of the self.

Embodied scaffolding involves one's available kinetic and expressive repertoire of one's body; the social scaffolding includes one's interpersonal relations with others, and lastly, material scaffolding entails one's integration "with the material culture: things, spaces, and places comprising [one's] everyday environments"

Krueger, Joel. "Schizophrenia and the Scaffolded Self." *Topoi-An International Review of Philosophy* 39.3 (2020): 597-609. Web.

(1970), mentioned earlier in the chapter in which Abel, who was born deaf, wears a hearing aid just to "look not so deaf" to the Hearing. The aids, he says, when switched on make 'terrible sounds. Sounds makes a bad, bad pain, in all the face and inside my side. When I cough or sneeze, I weep because of pain. It is like sun breaking apart in my head. I have to turn it off. It's not for Deaf, it is for Hearing' (138). It is unambiguous that Abel's volitional acquiescence in wearing a hearing aid, instead of being a manifestation of his disciplined machine-like agency is more an attempt to hide his shame at the cost of bearing intense somatic pain and discomfort.

Another instance that resonates with the inter-personal dimension of material scaffoldings is evident in Holston's memoir *Life After Deaf* (2019) where he depicts his sexual experiences while wearing hearing aids:

> We were well aware of the drawbacks to my wearing my hearing aid while making love. If anything got too close to that ear – a nose, a hand, a foot, whatever – the hearing aid let out a yelp that's audible and not just to me. There is nothing like a squealing hearing aid to spoil the mood. (109)

To mitigate the awkwardness, Holston started to rely on physical embodied cues from his partner: 'changes in temperature, pulse rate, scent, taste, and heartbeat' (111), and other visual cues supplied by keeping the lights on. Together with the social connotations of wearing hearing aids, such ordeals beckon to the exigent need to give absolute centrality to the phenomenological underpinnings of deafness; and to make better hearing aids that are specifically designed for people with a hearing loss.

In all these excerpts concerning the operation of artificial hip joints and hearing-aids, the frequent and occasional eruption of "resistances" is again discernible. The machines and the body do not coincide with each other to foster a symbiotic collaboration; instead, machinic errors and irrevocable limitations materialise to make way for embodied readjustments and recalibrations. Notwithstanding the all too frequent manifestations of "unintended consequences" [391] on the part of the machines, this reading contends that, rather than perceiving them as resistances – which are acts of wilful antagonistic confrontations – they must be understood as technical faults and inconveniences, which beckon to the need for further technological innovation and improvement, not in a pursuit to rectify,

391 Malm, Andreas. *The Progress of This Storm : Nature and Society in a Warming World*. 2018. Web.

cure and hide impairments, but to deliver an experience of superior accessibility, efficiency or usability and economic feasibility.

Distributed Anthropomorphism V/s Ethical Anthropocentrism

This chapter has examined contemporary delineations of AT traversing varied theoretical perspectives: beginning with posthumanism and transhumanism, and extending to contemporary approaches to the new materialism, it has attempted to bring to the surface the growing anthropomorphisation of machines, primarily through the metaphor of the cyborg. In so doing, the primary aim of the current enquiry has been to reinstate a dialectical method of negotiating the relationship between humans and machines, in which the former wields intentionality, agency, and consciousness with the authority to operate the latter, and implement needful embodied accommodations; while the latter being purely functional and non-agential remains indifferent, and non-passive or randomly reactive to the manual accommodations of the former. This enquiry, partly in consilience with Murray's proposition in *Disability and the Posthuman*[392], propounding the pivotal importance of "disability consciousness'"[393] in 'rethinking the practice and ethics that…constitute 'assistive' engineering technology' (89), has argued for restoring a phenomenological and an anthropocentric perspective in the structural design of prosthetic technology so as to 'give agency to the people who use [them] everyday without glamour or fanfare' (Serlin 26)[394]. Contra Murray, however, who proposes to think of "disability consciousness" in a posthumanist ethos that celebrates disability bodies as signifying 'some undetermined subversive power' and in which 'lives, bodies and communities are not made whole again' (Murray 172),[395] this chapter, has argued for giving voice to an anthropocentric and a humanist "disability consciousness" which renders the dialectics of wholeness and incompleteness, unity and fragmentation, entirely obsolete.

The reconsideration of "disability consciousness" under an anthropocentric lens not only curtails the abled and non-abled divide, thereby bolstering a heterogenous and an inclusive socio-cultural milieu, but it also opens an expansive space that engenders an ethical, and a productive and non-fetishist

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392 Murray, Stuart. *Disability and the Posthuman: Bodies, Technology, and Cultural Futures*. Liverpool University Press, 2020. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv11qdtsh. Accessed 25 Sept. 2020.

393 By this Murray means, "imagining… the ways in which a prosthetic can be made different precisely *because* a person with disability comes to use it. It is this critical idea of a 'disability consciousness', a *foregrounding* of not only disability experience, but disability logic" (89)

394 Serlin, David. *Replaceable You: Engineering the Body in Postwar America*. University of Chicago Press, 2004.

395 Ibid,.

technological and medical culture. The foregoing of presuppositions identifying disability bodies under the imaginaries of the after or posthuman avoids the inherent pitfalls of supplanting the formerly proclaimed deviant and crippling otherness of disability bodies with a glamorous and opulent form of otherness aptly mirrored in the contemporary fantasies of human infallibility and the distributed anthropomorphism of prosthetic tools. In so doing, this not only distorts and misrepresents the organic methods of engineering science based on 'skepticism, fallibilism, open debate, and empirical testing' (Pinker 36),[396] as intentional and agential failures, but also obstructs the contribution of "disability consciousness" in the design and manufacturing of ATs. Thus, there is a pressing need to adopt an anthropocentric approach towards disabilities and prosthetic technology in which 'ethical values are derived from human needs, interests' (940)[397] and involving the experiential contributions of those who will use these technologies as means towards their desired ends and goals.

396 Pinker, Steven. *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*. London: Penguin Books, 2018. Print.

397 Ibid,.

Chapter 4: Between Transcendence and Simulation: Navigating the Hyper-materiality of Contemporary Prostheses

> The prosthesis is not a mere extension of the human body; it is the constitution of this body qua "human" (Steigler 152)[398]

The term prosthesis has undergone myriad transmutations ever since it was first adapted into a medical lexicon in 1704. The long journey of prosthesis from its original grammatical etymology– denoting 'the addition of a syllable to the beginning of the word' (218)[399]– to its subsequent medical definition– signifying 'replacement of a missing part of the body with an artificial one' (218)[400]– continues into the present. Resonating with the epigram of the chapter, in its contemporary connotations prosthesis is either a co-constituent of humanity in which it both defines and creates the human or is used paradoxically to replace humanity and the human body to herald a transhuman future. This ethos is exemplified by the performance artist Stelarc, whose radical experimentations with prosthetic technology are predisposed towards:

> questioning of the biological status quo of the body, so [he] can happily accept that this body has evolved as an absent body, that it's profoundly obsolete, that it's now being invaded, and through technology becomes a phantom body– phantom not as in phantasmagorical, but rather phantom as in phantom limb sensation– a kind of a visual visceral sensation that is still coupled to a physical body. (133)[401]

Such voices are abundant within the domain of body and machine inquiries. The rather more scant challenges to such assumptions include those of Andy Clark, who writes that 'the very things that sometimes seem most post-human, the deepest and most profound of our potential biotechnological mergers, will reflect nothing so much as their thoroughly human source' (Clark 6)[402]. In a similarly sceptical vein, Anne Balsamo stresses the hyper-material nature of technologies, declaring that despite our radical integration with technology, we still 'never leave the meat behind' (40)[403]. Analogously, commenting on their proposed cyborg status, most real-life prosthesis wearers vehemently affirm that

398 Stiegler, Bernard. *Technics and Time*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1998. Print.

399 Wills, David. *Prosthesis*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1995. Print.

400 Ibid,.

401 Featherstone, Mike. *Body Modification*. London: SAGE, 2000. Print.

402 Clark, Andy. *Natural Born Cyborgs.* New York: Oxford University Press. USA, 2003. Web.

403 Balsamo, Anne Marie. *Technologies of the Gendered Body : Reading Cyborg Women.* Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 1996. Print.

'amputees (and other disabled people using assistive technology) are not half-human hybrids with semi-autonomous technology; we are people' (382)[404].

This heartfelt need to insist on a continuing humanity in the wake of radical augmentations and transformations, suggests a need to test the validity of such techno-centric transhumanist claims, and to inquire into the place of human materiality in the designing of prostheses. With these questions in mind, this chapter will examine representations of the functional, aesthetic, and ergonomic attributes[405] of modernday prosthetics. It will investigate the challenges that both amputees and prosthetists encounter in the designing and donning of an artificial body part. Firstly, the chapter offers a survey of the changing nature of prosthetics, and examines briefly the rise and configuration of techno-fetishism. To this end, photographic illustrations[406] of prostheses and their advertisements from World War Two onwards will be deployed to chart out the evolution of prosthesis design since the boom of robotics and cyber technology[407]. These depictions will be further compared and contrasted with vignettes of personal experiences of amputees and performance artists extracted from magazines and newspaper articles and diverse literary and autobiographical texts. This range of texts is intended to furnish a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural and political forces that influence the development of medical technologies. The examination of the various delineations of fictional and non-fictional experiences will give a more detailed picture of particular body-technology collaborations and the place of various disabilities within this so-called "cyborgian" network. The focus here is on replacements of lost body parts with artificial limbs, eyes, breasts and hair, all of which are visible aspects of the body. The aim of this chapter is also to continue the critique of the supercrip culture of a technology-obsessed landscape and again to show how both vulnerability, failure and hyper-reflexivity might instead be regarded as mechanisms of rehabilitation.

The range of texts under focus belong to a diversity of genres and a time period spanning the last seventy years. The gamut of primary texts traverses categories such as the fantastic, the uncanny, thriller, crime fiction, sci-fi, cyberpunk, critical biography, autobiography and biography. The profusion of genres itself instantiates human proclivities towards exploring and exploiting the narrative and phenomenal potentialities lurking behind body-technology alliances. The selected texts include

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404 Kurzman, Steven L. "Presence and Prosthesis: A Response to Nelson and Wright." *Cultural Anthropology* 16.3 (2001): 374-87. Web.

405 Product designing is based on three principal models: "appearance model might be described as a *looks-like* prototype; a technical rig might be a *works-like* prototype; and an ergonomic rig might be a *feels-like* prototype" (Pullin 141). This shall be examined at length in this chapter. Pullin, Graham. *Design Meets Disability*. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2009. Web.

406 The justification for using photographic illustrations solely for this chapter is that, unlike other forms of assistive technologies, that were explored previously, it is the invention of modern-day prosthetics that has been the vehicle for techno–fetishism. In addition to this, the ethos of augmentation and surgeries is deeply rooted in the mimetic, cosmetic and robotic materiality of artificial body parts, as opposed to that of assistive technologies elaborated in the preceding section.

407 This is also the nascence of Cyborgism. For a more detailed survey, see the "Introduction" of the thesis.

novels such as: JG Ballard's *Cras*h (1973), David Foster Wallace's *The Broom of the System* (1987), Catherine Dunn's *Geek Lov*e (1989), and Robert Pobi's *City of Windows* (2019). Prosthetics also appear ubiquitously as material props in modern theatre, and this section also examines dramatic texts, namely, Orson Welles's *Moby Dick Rehearsed* (1955), Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* (1978), and April De Angelis's *Soft Vengeance* (1984). Also included are short stories: Flannery O'Connor's *Good Country People* (1955), and R.V Cassill's *The Father* (1962). Non-fictional texts presented as memoirs also explore prosthetic themes, such as Oliver Sacks's *A Leg to Stand On (*1984), Josh Sundquist's *Just Don't Fall* (2010), Lisa Lynch's *The C Word* (2010), and Lauren Scruggs's *Still LoLo: A Spinning Propeller, a Horrific Accident, and a Family's Journey of Hope* (2013). This varied selection of texts allows for the navigation of a range of embodied interactions with various forms of medical technologies engaging in myriad modes of technofetishism, technoanimism[408], and techno-synergism[409]. In order to further expound these ideas, let us first take a look at the vicissitudes of prostheses development since the Victorian era, with emphasis on their model type, user experiences and social reception.

Prostheses Then and Now: A Brief Survey

The period after the American Civil War (1865 onwards) witnessed a growth in the lower limb manufacturing industry. Many factors contributed to this spike: the first being the development of better 'surgical practice, hygiene, and pain relief' (Sweet 34)[410]. Owing to these promising advancements, the limb industry flourished, heralding countless innovations in the design of lower limb prostheses. As Ryan Sweet writes:

> In 1851 Benjamin Frank Palmer of Philadelphia won first prize at the International Exhibition of 1851 in London for his artificial leg, which used a spring in the foot to give firmness of step; in 1858 Douglas Bly[i] [Fig 4.1, Pg. 265] developed what he called the "anatomical leg", which incorporated an ivory ball in a vulcanised rubber socket to provided polycentric ankle motion;

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408 This is when the "prosthesis is seen to have will and life of its own" (Sobchack, 23). This has been extensively explored in the previous chapter under the umbrella concept of Enchanted Materialism. For more on this, refer to: Smith, M., & Morra, J. (2006). *The Prosthetic Impulse: From A Posthuman Present To A Biocultural Future*. Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press.

409 This neologism is inspired by Cassandra Crawford's idea of synergy between phantom pains and artificial limbs as constituting each other as a form of successful rehabilitation. In this study, the same concept of "synergy" has been reconstituted as "techno–synergy" though signifying the same thing. This will be extensively discussed in the forthcoming sections. For more on this, see: Crawford, Cassandra S. *Phantom Limb : Amputation, Embodiment, and Prosthetic Technology. 2014.* Biopolitics ; 16. Web

410 Sweet, Craig Ryan. *Prosthetic Body Parts in Literature and Culture, 1832 to 1908. (2016). Web. Accessed on 1/1/2021.* https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10871/22746/SweetR.pdf?sequence=1

> in 1861 New Yorker A. A. Marks introduced the rubber foot, which simplified ankle joint manufacture and enabled a more life-like gait; in 1863, another New Yorker, Dubois Parmelee, pioneered using atmospheric pressure as found in a suction socket to attach above-the-knee artificial legs. (34)[411]

These conspicuous medical strides towards restoring natural gait were also implicitly guided by the motivation to hide the "hideous stump" (289)[412] and conceal the disability. Stephen Mihm quotes a celebratory review of the Clement leg, 'the materials employed are selected and finished . . . with such care as not only to give entire freedom of action, but in appearance, to deceive the sense of sight in other persons' (289)[413].This sentiment was pervasive throughout the nineteenth century, with even surgeons reiterating the prominence of concealment; as one surgeon wrote about a Civil War amputee: 'in every appearance– standing, locomotion, dancing– he passes for a whole man' (289)[414]. The ideal of "wholeness" was deeply embedded in the Victorian obsession with proper appearances. Moreover, the emergence of physiognomy[415] and phrenology[416] as medical domains reinforced the perception of physical impairments as totems of moral and intellectual inferiority, significantly curtailing amputees' prospects of social mobility and employment.

Despite the nineteenth century predilection for appearances and "wholeness", prostheses seldom mimicked human flesh. In fact, exclusive priority was given to replicating the human physiological action of walking, but the limbs were far removed from reproducing the physical shape, skin tone and contours of a real human limb. This is because their design was oriented entirely to the pragmatic function of guaranteeing employment, efficiency, and of extricating (typically) men from bearing the stigma of uselessness and non-productivity. The "split hook"[ii] hand (Fig 4.2, Pg. 266) aptly exemplifies this tendency, as the name suggests: it is a hand in the shape of a hook, primarily used for executing prehensile functions such as 'holding cards, grasping a pen, gripping a knife or pistol, or remaining rigid. The hand had no variable tension or pinch – only hold and release functions, activated by a button' (Ott 26)[417]. Prostheses of a strictly mechanical and utilitarian mould were prominent until the mid-twentieth century. Till then they denoted the standard definition of 'artificial additions, appendages, or extensions of the human body' (Serlin 25)[418]. But in the 1950s, midway through the

411 Ibid,.

412 Ott, Katherine, Serlin, David, and Mihm, Stephen. *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives : Modern Histories of Prosthetics*. New York: New York UP, 2002. Print.

413 Ibid.

414 Ibid.

415 This new branch of science determined an individual's character by closely studying their facial features.

416 Akin to physiognomy, phrenology studied moral and intellectual character by calibrating the size of the skull.

417 Ott, Katherine, Serlin, David, and Mihm, Stephen. *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives : Modern Histories of Prosthetics*. New York: New York UP, 2002. Print.

418 Serlin, David. *Replaceable You : Engineering the Body in Postwar America*. Chicago ; London: U of Chicago, 2004. Print.

Macy Conferences[419], prostheses began to transform in multiple ways: for example, unlike the simple organic material of early prostheses 'such as leather, wood, glass, and metal…vulcanized rubber or early plastics' (26)[420], mid-century prosthetic devices began to be made from 'new materials such as acrylic, polyurethane, and stainless steel' (26)[421]. Furthermore, due to the advent of Norbert Weiner's "cybernetics"[422] or "biocybernetics", new biomechanical principles were applied in crafting these devices. According to Serlin, 'because of these myriad changes, prosthetics themselves were entirely reimagined by the designers and engineers who made them as well as by the veteran and civilian amputees who wore them' (26)[423].

Evidently, this caused a sudden shift in prosthetic designs in which ergonomics often supplanted the biomechanical practical side. One example of this is the Henry Dreyfuss arm[iii] (Fig 4.3, Pg. 267), which emphasised "feel" over practical utility. In Dreyfuss's words:

> if feel is of importance to the housewife at her ironing board, imagine how infinitely more important it is in the artificial limbs of an amputee. We learned a great deal about this in our work for the Veterans Administration. To understand the plight of the amputee, members of our staff had artificial limbs strapped on them. (29)[424]

Dreyfuss's prioritisation of "feel" is a radical innovation which chiefly catered to the elite or white-collar customers who needed something that looked more civilised even if utility was compromised. With this turn in the customer base, novel advertising techniques were inaugurated. In fact, the image deployed to promote the arm was a discernible leap from anything that had preceded it. In the image 4.3 we see a male hand clad in a white stainless Oxford shirt attempting to write at the desk. The seated position of the prosthesis wearer entwined with the job allocated to him speaks volumes about his class and consequently of the distinguished socio-economic obligations the prosthesis is expected to fulfil. This is in stark contrast with the image 4.4[iv] (Fig 4.4, Pg. 268) which depicts a gallery of pictures of working-class men diligently employed in manual labour. Their active body and indistinct attire paint a picture far removed from the relaxed comfort of a writing hand. Printed in the year 1917, these pictures clearly demonstrate Serlin's observation that the role of earlier prosthetics was 'linked

419 Conferences on cybernetics held in the New York city. The series lasted from 1941–1960. Extensively explored in the introduction.

420 Ibid,.

421 Ibid,.

422 Use of robotics, computers and information processing to decode human subjectivity and embodiment.

423 Ibid,.

424 Dreyfuss, Henry. *Designing for People*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955. Print.

explicitly to the fragile politics of labour, employment and self-worth' (25)[425] for veteran amputees and industrial workers.

The crucial area of differentiation of the two images lies not only in their distinctive representations of prosthesis use, but also in the ostensible departure of new age prosthesis from the mundane realities of perfunctory drudgery. If earlier prosthetics focussed solely on 'making the damaged male body productive' (Serlin 47), then those that followed had a more glamorous function to fulfil: they provided avenues for play and leisure – the image 4.5[v] (Pg. 269) shows a veteran amputee demonstrating the new hydraulic leg developed in 1948. His athletic posture signifies the progress in the pragmatic utility of prostheses from rehabilitation to relaxation. Whilst it is not ethically questionable to offer prosthetics that afford a chance to play and enjoy activities outside of work, such illustrations inevitably fall into a murkier territory when real physical discomforts are dismissed and minimised as 'minor engineering difficulties' (Bess 6)[426] and misplaced fanfare follows flawed technological feats, thereby "enfreaking" both the prosthesis and its wearers.

The term "enfreakment" was coined by David Hevey[427] to describe the processes which foster the othering of disabled embodiments. That is, by displaying disability as a unique and an extraordinary experience, "enfreakment" partitions the "freak" from the "norm". Its presence within the realm of prosthetic devices is discernible in its crossover with robotics when, instead of ensuring rehabilitation, prostheses position the amputees in the zone of either glamour or misfortune, turning them into event–spectacles of awe on one side and misery and helplessness on the other. In this reading, enfreakment transpires in two scenarios: when prostheses stand out as detached and disembodied technological props; and/or when they become visible embodied attachments that maintain their unique personality to the exclusion of the prosthesis wearers.

Enfreakment, Prosthesis and Literature

"Enfreakment" in literary representations of prosthesis hinges on the power of the spectacle, the way that intense objectifications of prosthesis and the body become matters to be devoured by intellectual and visual curiosity. Analogous to Rosemarie Garland Thomson's stance on nineteenth century freak shows where, 'the exhibited body became a text written in boldface to be deciphered according to the

425 Serlin, David. *Replaceable You : Engineering the Body in Postwar America*. University of Chicago Press, 2004.

426 Bess, Furman. *Progress in Prosthetics.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare,1962. Web.

427 Hevey, David., et al. *The Creatures Time Forgot: Photography and Disability Imagery.* Routledge, 1992. Print.

needs and desires of the onlookers' (60)[428], in the mid-twentieth century, it is the prostheticised body that stands to be decoded and deconstructed. By painting a visual spectacle of the prosthetic body, "enfreakment" gives birth to an Event– something that outshines the everyday flow of realities and extricates the inertia of seeing the usual. This intensification of the gaze into an Event-spectacle transforms the act of seeing into an act of curious deliberation and deciphering.

Flannery O'Connor's short story *Good Country People*[429] offers a germane point of departure to navigate the symbolic relevance of the Event spectacle, and the changing medico-ideological landscape around prosthesis. Published in 1955 – the formative years of cybernetics – the story provides a glimpse into the early fascination with prosthetic technology. It revolves around Hulga-Joy's country life as a Southerner in America, and her unfortunate sexual and emotional predation by a swindling Bible salesman going by the pseudonym of Manley Pointer. Hulga-Joy is a thirty-two year old amputee, who lost her leg in a hunting accident at the age of ten and has been wearing an artificial leg ever since. Equivalent to the Victorian stance towards people with disabilities, O'Connor depicts Hulga-Joy as a disagreeable and sheepish atheist whose fundamental field of study is "Nothing". Right at the outset, the author establishes Hulga-Joy's impaired embodiment as the primal source of her vanity, and intellectual and spiritual blindness. Simultaneously, this is also what sets her apart as an object of fascination and of the deep piercing gaze of others. For instance, their tenant Mrs. Freeman's 'beady steel-pointed eyes had penetrated far enough behind her face to reach some secret fact. Something about her seemed to fascinate Mrs. Freeman and then one day Hulga realized that it was the artificial leg' (271). Thus, for her, Hulga-Joy represents the captivating grotesque. Her embodiment satiates Mrs Freeman's longing for the macabre, for she could raptly listen to 'the details of [Hulga–Joy's] hunting accident, how the leg had been literally blasted off, how she had never lost consciousness … any time as if it had happened an hour ago' (271).

O'Connor juxtaposes Mrs Freeman's innocent curiosity concerning the prosthetic leg with the Bible salesman Manley Pointer's sinister trap to rob Hulga-Joy off her leg in a dark secluded place and eventually to deprive her of the false sense of security in her own intellectual prowess. One day after making an unsuccessful sales pitch to Mrs Hopewell, Hulga-Joy's mother, Manley propositions Hulga-Joy, desiring to take her on a walk. He expresses an almost rabid curiosity about her leg, which unlike Mrs Hopewell's curiosity, is articulated through peremptory demands and transgressive questions:

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428 Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. *Extraordinary Bodies : Figuring Physical Disability in* American Culture *and Literature*. Columbia University Press, 1997. Print.

429 O'Connor, Flannery. *The Complete Stories.* London: Faber, 1990. Print.

'Where does your wooden leg join on?' (188). O' Connor shrewdly captures Hulga-Joy's discomfiture at this importunity by showing that the leg, just like any other body part, is an intimate part of her being. It resides with her as safely, securely and privately as 'someone would [keep] his soul' (190). In so being, "the wooden leg" is not an object for her, as it is for the onlookers, but is unequivocally "her own leg". Detachable or not, the leg is part of her embodiment.

Surmounting her initial resistance, Hulga-Joy eventually defers to him and shows Manley how to unscrew the leg. Once the leg is disjointed from the stump, Manley grabs it and 'pushe[s] it farther away with his foot' (192). Hulga entreats him to return it, but to no avail. Shortly after, he prepares to dismount the steps of the barn, leaving her alone and abandoned:

> When all of him had passed but his head, he turned and regarded her with a look that no longer had any admiration in it. "I've gotten a lot of interesting things," he said. "One time I got a woman's glass eye this way. And you needn't to think you'll catch me because Pointer ain't really my name. I use a different name at every house I call at and don't stay nowhere long … When she turned her churning face toward the opening, she saw his blue figure struggling successfully over the green speckled lake. (191)

In the end, Manley turns out to be a disingenuous connoisseur of exotic body parts. The motivation behind his embezzling Hulga-Joy is his propensity to amass bodily artefacts. His collectibles – glass eyes and legs – put forth the burgeoning appeal of technology, not entirely as a fetish[430] but as a fascinating and an alluring spectacle that must be totally consumed to gratify the impulse to know by way of the gaze and touch. This signals towards an attitudinal transformation that is more generally apparent at the turn of the century. If Victorian sensibilities shunned the sight of the "odious cripple", preferring deceptive artificial body parts, then the proceeding century demanded the sight of the cripple, the site of lack and for the object of replacement to be in full view, available to be decrypted by onlookers.

Orson Welles's 1955 theatre production, *Moby Dick-Rehearsed* instantiates this claim by propounding the sociocultural and symbolic iterations of prostheses during the Victorian era. The play is a concise rendition of Melville's long novel *Moby Dick* (1851) and likewise pays sustained attention to Ahab's missing leg– devoured by the eponymous whale, on which he attempts to avenge himself: 'I've lost this leg. I now do prophesy, that I'll dismember my dismemberer!' (Act I, 42). Akin to the

430 The difference between fetish and fascination will be explored in the successive parts of the chapter.

novel, the play projects the Victorian trope of the "villain amputee" in the character of Ahab who, as Peleg recounts, 'ever since he lost that leg…by that cursed whale [has] been … kind o' moody– and savage sometimes' (25). Unlike Hulga-Joy, who is a captivating grotesque figure, the figure of Ahab seems intended to incite spiritual horror. His madness and wild obsession are symbolised in the "tap-tapping" sounds of the bone leg along the ship deck. It is the central stage direction which serves as an emblem of his towering presence: 'here I am, as proud as a Greek God' (49) and a reminder that neither he nor the shipmates are allowed to forget the purpose of their journey, which is the mutilation of his "dismemberer" Moby Dick.

In conjunction with the symbolic relevance of the leg, its literal embodied iterations are discernible too in Ahab's reference to his phantom leg:

> Would it speak well for your work, Carpenter,[431]
>
> If, when I come to mount this new leg,
>
> In the identical place with it,
>
> I feel another? – my old, lost leg,
>
> Of flesh and bone?
>
> Carpenter:
>
> True Cap'n, I've heard tell
>
> o' something curious on that score.
>
> They do say a dismasted man
>
> Don't ever quite entirely get rid
>
> o' feeling his first spar. (49)[432]

The reference to the phantom leg bears testimony to the ephemeral, ghost like traces of flesh and blood embedded in the psyche and physiology of amputees. It exists as an ambiguous reminder of loss, and

431 Owing to the mechanical structure of prosthetics in the nineteenth century, carpenters and clockmakers functioned as prostheses makers.

432 Welles, Orson. *Moby Dick Rehearsed*. London: Samuel French Inc.,2011. Print.

the impossibility of completely foregoing the experience of embodiment. It is owing to this that despite declaring himself a "Greek god", Ahab is full of anxieties and qualms about his new leg. In fact, in the climax of the play, the final struggle between Moby Dick and Ahab culminates in a bitter repetition of fate in which the whale once again bites off his artificial leg leaving him helpless and, in desperation, crying for support: 'Help me up, men. … Let me stand.… So…. So' (69). This suggests how Ahab's confrontation with his vulnerability and embodied lack cannot be mitigated by his artificial leg. The portrayal also reiterates Victorian suspicions of technology by stressing its duplicitous and deceptive nature. This Luddite[433] sentiment further reinforces the fact that fascination with technology was still beyond anticipation in the mid nineteenth century when Melville's novel was published.

In conjunction with the revelation of the ideological underpinnings of the uses and development of technology, Ahab's second mutilation stages enfreakment by making his leg a disembodied wooden prop that signifies metaphysical horror rather than simply being the display of a functional object. Similarly, 'Ahab's external misshapenness [represents] an unflinching attempt to grapple with the deforming principles of man's insatiable quest for mastery over himself and nature' (Mitchell and Snyder, 133)[434]. Mitchell and Snyder also suggest that 'Melville's use of disability in this manner proved neither unique nor a radical departure from nineteenth-century artistic appetites for contorting the bodies of its literary creations' (33)[435].

The long narrative form of the novel *Moby Dick* affords an extensive verbal scenario that conveys an expansive sense of the metaphysical horror triggered by Ahab's "contorting body"; in contrast, the play *Moby Dick Rehearsed* is severely delimited in word length and time and space continuum. By virtue of being a theatre production, its performative aspect inhibits purely abstract philosophical thought, but instead, audiences witness Ahab in action as an indispensable part of the immediate staged spectacle. In this, Ahab's "external misshapenness" simultaneously raises the consciousness and awareness of audience and readers by making them confront their feelings about different embodiments. According to Kirsty Johnston, this is particularly true of theatre:

> It is important to think about theatre's role in the "system of knowledge that provides materials for and increases critical consciousness about the way that some bodies make other bodies feel" (Seibers 20)". When directors make choices about play selection,

433 The Luddite movement marked an early nineteenth century opposition to the growing technologization and industrialisation of society. The Luddites were particularly concerned about technology hijacking every aspect of human life, and the continual replacement of manual labour with machines. They also expressed misgivings about the diminishing human over technology.

434 Mitchell, David T., and Snyder, Sharon L. *Narrative Prosthesis : Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Michigan: Ann Arbor, U of Michigan, 2000. Print.

435 Ibid,.

> venue, casting, design, marketing, and accessibility, whom do they imagine in their artistic teams, communities, and audiences? When critics assess works, do they imagine readers with lived disability experience? When actors perform onstage, how are their bodies and performance choices read, understood, and felt? These and many related questions are asked often among disability theatre and performance artists, activists, critics, and scholars. (2-3)[436]

Given that the ethos of theatre is precisely to conjure up visceral spectacles, it is of crucial significance to see exactly how impactful the portrayals of disabilities and prosthetics are on the late twentieth century stage. Sam Shepherd's Pulitzer Prize winning play *Buried Child* vividly articulates the primal and continuing significance of theatre in discussing disabilities. Its alarming portrayal of Bradley exemplifies enfreakment by painting him with a single stroke as a physically impaired and miserable character whose tragic fate is sealed from the very beginning. First produced in 1978 at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco, *Buried Child*[437] is a dismal tale of four surviving members of a family, namely: Dodge, in his seventies, alcoholic, bedridden, and prone to epilepsy; Halie, his wife in her mid sixties; Tilden, their mentally unstable older son; and Bradley, the younger son who has lost his leg in a chain saw accident and wears a prosthesis. There are other significant adjacent characters: Vince, Tilden's unacknowledged and estranged son; Shelly, his girlfriend; and Father Dewis, a Protestant minister, who is supposedly having an affair with Halie. The play is set in the living room of Dodge and Halie's house. From the outset, the audience witnesses miscommunication, alienation and antagonism amongst the family members. It is apparent that the family are evading a secret that perpetually haunts their communication with each other. Every physical act is encumbered by a spell of monotony and repetition. In Act I, Tilden is positioned centre stage unloading a huge heap of corn and shortly after, he 'starts picking up the ears of the corn one at a time and husking them' (8). This is followed by Dodge napping on his sofa whilst Tilden covers him with corn husks, intermittently guzzling down Dodge's beer and pausing to stare at him:

> *TILDEN stands quietly, staring at DODGE as he uncaps the bottle and takes a long drink. He caps the bottle and sticks it in his hip pocket. He looks around at the husks on the floor and then back to DODGE moves centre stage and gathers an armload of corn husks then crosses back to the sofa. He stands holding the*

436 Johnston, Kirsty. *Disability Theatre and Modern Drama: Recasting Modernism.* London, Bloomsbury:2016. Print.

437 Shepard, Sam. *Buried Child*. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1997. Print.

> *husks over DODGE and looking down at him he gently spreads the corn husks over the whole length of DODGE'S body. He stands back and looks at DODGE. Pulls out bottle, take another drink, returns bottle to his hip pocket. He gathers more husks and repeats the procedure until the floor is clean of corn husks and DODGE is completely covered in them except for his head. TILDEN takes another long drink, stares at DODGE sleeping then quietly exits stage left. (19)*

The repetitive vaudevillian gestures and sporadic pauses are fraught with Beckettian characteristics, vehement reminders of Beckett's frozen tableau.[438] The aggressive energy of Tilden's surreptitious motions is adequately delineated by the embodied non-verbal movement alone. The active handing and unhanding of corn husks around Dodge adds an extra-material dimension to the scene, while concomitantly unravelling Tilden's vindictive desire to murder his father and entomb and bury him alive in a catafalque made of corn husks. In so being, the entire act becomes profoundly symbolic: it takes the audience towards the vicious family secret lurking in the hazy oblivion of unspoken words.

The ornamentation of the Dodges' faux tomb is reinforced by Bradley's hair-cutting session with his father. His entry is riddled with the clinking sounds of metal; the thump of falling on the floor; and the prominent mechanical limp. The stage directions emphasise the disruptive sequence of Bradley's entrance which demonstrates that his embodiment is not the neutral signifier of an actor's or a character's physical presence on stage as seen previously with Tilden, but rather reveals how Bradley's body is one that is naturally imbued with a performative dimension sustained by its permanent state of impairment:

> *BRADLEY recovers his footing and makes it through the screen door onto the porch ... He is a big man dressed in a grey sweat shirt, black suspenders, baggy dark blue pants… His left leg is wooden, having been amputated above the knee, he moves with an exaggerated mechanical limp. The squeaking sounds of leather and metal accompany his walk coming from the harness and hinges of the false leg. His arms and shoulders are extremely powerful and muscular due to a lifetime dependency on the upper torso doing all the work for the legs. He is about five years younger than TILDEN. He moves laboriously to the stage*

438 Beckett adopted this theater technique where characters completely froze on the stage for two–three seconds. This was symbolic of spatio–temporal stasis. Has already been explored in Chapter 2.

> *right door and enters, closing the door behind him. He doesn't notice DODGE at first. He moves toward the staircase.* (19)

These stage directions explicitly highlight that all one needs to know of Bradley is that he is an amputee. The audience is encouraged to ignore any enunciation – verbal or physical – that exceeds merely acknowledging Bradley as a legless person. Even the introduction to his character focusses specifically on him being the 'next oldest son, an amputee' (1). This single-minded, monochromatic portrait of enfreakment renders Bradley merely an incompetent amputee. Furthermore, the supplementation of his pronounced limp with a description of his "extremely powerful and muscular" upper body redirects audience-gaze (and readerly attention) to the details of his embodiment.

This portrayal raises the question as to why is it only Bradley who needs to be under abject scrutiny? Could we not have discovered Bradley's fake leg, just as we did Dodge's immobility and alcoholism and Tilden's psychotic tendencies, as we probe deeper into the semantics of the text? Unlike the maladjustments of the former two characters that signify mystery, Bradley's amputation remains an empty, hollowed out signifier. Its banality is validated by Halie's wretched plea for 'a hero. A man! A whole man!' (58). Here too, Bradley's amputation and prosthetic leg are made to circumscribe the traditional notions of wholeness and lack, order and chaos, the hidden and the exposed. This is brought to the fore in the concluding act of the play in which the family secret is finally unravelled. What catapults the plot towards its climax and denouement is the attempted snatching of Bradley's leg, which happens to be Shelly's two-pronged act to avenge herself after being harassed by Bradley and blatantly ignored by other family members:

> *(SHELLY suddenly grabs her coat off the wooden leg and takes both the leg and coat downstage, away from BRADLEY.)* Mom!
>
> BRADLEY : "Mom! She's got my leg! She's taken my leg! I never did anything to her! She's stolen my leg! She's a devil, Mom. How did she get in our house? *(BRADLEY reaches pathetically in the air for his leg. SHELLY sets it down for a second, puts on her coat fast, and picks up the leg again, DODGE starts coughing again softly.)…*
>
> BRADLEY: Mom! That's my leg! Get my leg back! I can't do anything without my leg! She's trying to torture me. *(BRADLEY keeps on making whimpering*

> *sounds and reaching for his leg.)… (DODGE starts laughing softly to himself in between coughs.)* …
>
> BRADLEY: Gimme back my leg! (54-55)

The discernible event-spectacle in this excerpt abounds in flagrantly objectifying Bradley's embodied limitation and in the deployment of the prosthesis as a material prop that is detached and disengaged from Bradley's stump – a glaring example of prosthesis as enfreakment. This occurrence endows the leg with an inherent power to destabilise the precarious family dynamics. When Shelley brandishes the leg in accompaniment to the persistent demand to make her privy to the family secret, it assumes the function of an object of extortion and intimidation:

> BRADLEY: If I had my leg you wouldn't be saying this. You'd never get away with it if I had my leg.
>
> DODGE: *(pointing to Shelly)* She's got your leg. (*laughs*) She's gonna keep your leg too. (*To Shelly)* She wants to hear this. Don't you? (57)

At this point, the enfreakment of the leg catalyses the disentanglement of the secret incestuous tryst between Halie and her older son Tilden and the subsequent drowning of their baby by Dodge. When Shelley prepares to leave after the secret is out, the leg is relayed to Vince, who takes sadistic delight in pushing it with his feet each time Bradley crawls towards it. The cruel irony of the situation is augmented by Dewis's presence, who surveys the situation but does not act to alleviate Bradley's plight. Rather he remains indifferent as the latter is reduced to being an object of derision:

> *BRADLEY tries to make a lunge for his wooden leg. VINCE quickly picks it up and dangles it over BRADLEY's head like a carrot. BRADLEY keeps making desperate grabs at the leg. DEWIS comes down the staircase and stops halfway, staring at VINCE and BRADLEY. VINCE looks up at DEWIS and smiles. He keeps moving backwards with the leg toward up left as BRADLEY crawls after him. (63)*

In a final act of horror, Vince tosses the leg off-stage with Bradley following it with a hapless whimper. The sustained treatment of the leg as a detached thing disables and alienates Bradley from his surroundings, removing his sense of agency. When Vince flings his leg beyond the vicinity of the stage, it not only an attempt to gloat at Bradley's misfortune, but it is also a gesture that announces

Vince as the sole inheritor and resident of the house. This usurpation follows after Dodge verbally bequeaths the house to Vince.

The play ends with the dual themes of alienation and resolution running parallel to each other. The former resonates with Bradley desperately groping for his leg and subsequently exiting the stage while the latter echoes with the closing scene in which 'Tilden … carries the corpse of a small child at chest level, staring down at it' (65). Tilden's reunion with the corpse of his drowned baby might seem grim, but it is a step towards resolving the latent crises and agony he is undergoing. In the end, it is the amputee cripple Bradley who is left with nothing, losing both his wooden leg and his family inheritance. Hence, he is rendered twice alienated. Moreover, in enfreaking Bradley and his leg, Shepard compels readers and audiences to acknowledge and live through the affects aroused in them when witnessing bodily differences. In a stark contrast to other characters, who either keep exiting and entering the scene of action – Vince, Tilden, and Halie –, or remain dormant in the background – like Dodge, Dewis, and Shelly –, Bradley and the leg occupy the main frame throughout the course of the play. We are never permitted to lose sight of the trajectory of Bradley's fate: from his arrival as a faltering but robust man on a wooden leg to him devolving into a miserable crawling creature, Shepard leaves no details untouched and unshown: this is also why the representation has such an unnerving effect even when it is projected simultaneously with the equally unsettling theme of incest. In fact, Bradley is strongly reminiscent of Beckett's "crawling creatures"[439] who never abandon their unending quest even if they have to resort to crawling as the best compromise. Moreover, the event spectacle conjured by the prolonged enfreaking manifests two extremes of body-technology merger: on one side there is the power of prosthetic technology to disguise the "odious cripple", while on the other, it shows the return of limitations once the prosthetic body part is removed. Shepard's agenda is not necessarily steeped in propagating a pro or anti-technology ideology, but his play forcefully brings into focus the part played by society in the larger picture of disabilities of which technology is now an integral part.

The emerging commonality between the texts analysed thus far, even as they span over a century's history of changing design, is their propensity to investigate prosthesis as an object-in-itself, that is, disjointing it from the body that wears it. In each of these texts, the voluntary or involuntary removal of prostheses triggers the onset of dissecting it in order to render some anthropomorphic signification. For instance, in *Moby Dick Rehearsed*, Ahab's leg denotes philosophical and visual techno-scepticism that navigates the place of man-made technology in an unfathomable universe; in *Good Country*

439 Explored in the first section of this thesis.

People, we see techno-fascination apparent in the zeal to collect exotic objects; and in *Buried Child* we traverse through techno-symbolism which, as explored above, stands in, providing mundane metaphors of wholeness and lack, for the forbidden, the hidden and the exposed. These forms of enfreakment bear strong hints of transcendence and alienation from the body because they somehow leave corporeality behind. To investigate embodied technology in the absence of embodiment lends a partial and flawed perspective on what prosthetics really do and what they represent for the person wearing them. A late twentieth century novel that draws upon this phenomenon is David Foster Wallace's *The Broom of the System* (1987). Like the texts discussed above, this novel also depicts and explores enfreakment, but in contradistinction to them, it does so without traumatically dismembering the prosthesis from its wearer. It is owing to this distinction that *The Broom of the System (TBOTS* from here onwards*)* focuses an innovatively critical light on the topic of disability and embodied technology. Here the missing body part and its replacement represent more than just abstract reasoning and the philosophising that we saw in the previous works. *TBOTS* critically acquaints us with a strand of "enfreakment" that is still entrenched in the embodied and phenomenal undertones of living with disabilities.

Enfreakment, Embodiment and Techno-fetishism in TBOTS

Foster Wallace's novel delineates its one-legged character, La Vache [440] in comic style. He is the youngest brother of the protagonist Lenore Beadsman and is the brightest in his family, a fresher at Amherst College who is known by his misnomer, "the Antichrist", for his undeniably satanic appearance. La Vache possesses a rather flippant attitude towards lectures, which he almost never attends. The humorous and sardonic reason he gives for this is: 'Well I'm disabled,' 'They can't expect a disabled person to hobble to every faraway, top-of-the-hill class of the semester' (335). La Vache is perpetually preoccupied with his artificial leg, to the extent that he even pats and interacts with it as if it is an animate entity. When one of his colleagues asks him for flashcards for a quiz, LaVache refers to himself in the first-person collective pronoun "we", suggesting the inclusion of the leg:

> "What can we do for you, big guy?" LaVache said, slapping the leg affectionately.
>
> "Introductory Economics. Second quiz. Bonds."

440 A French expression for awe, displeasure and surprise.

> "Feed the leg," said LaVache.
>
> LaVache opened the drawer in his leg and Clint Wood put the baggie inside.
>
> LaVache slapped the drawer shut and patted it. (344)[441]

The drawer functions as a stomach to the leg that needs to be fed and optimally nourished by La Vache. The anthropomorphising of the leg sheds on it a glimmer of techno-animism in which the leg occupies a separate individual being. This kind of enfreakment, in which prosthesis assumes sentience, continues to be a common literary and theoretical trope from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. According to Sobchack, its effect is that 'the animate and volitional human beings who use prosthetic technology disappear in the background – passive if not completely invisible – the prosthetic is seen to have a will and life of its own' (Sobchack 23)[442]. Even though in La Vache's case we do not see the leg as wielding an independent agency, we do observe his alienation from the prosthetic body part. His frequent allusions to his leg beckon to the disruptive assimilation of technology into his subjective and corporeal corpus: 'the leg is wondering what he has for it' (347); 'the leg and I look forward to seeing him and his fungal fee sometime tonight' (348); 'The leg will of course be positively growling with hunger by that time' (354); 'The leg likes that.' (355); 'Where do you think Lenore is?' the Antichrist asked the leg (381).

Moreover, La Vache's paranoia and yet companionship with the leg is fraught with existential connotations – his prosthesis is what gives meaning and a sense of purpose to his life. It is because of the leg that he is not left "thing-less", in other words, identity-less, meaningless and purposeless. In a conversation with Lenore, he says:

> Everybody here has a thing. You have to have a thing here. My thing is being the Antichrist, more or less being a waste-product and supporting my leg. A tragically wasted intellect. So to speak. You can't be thingless, Lenore. (381)

The claim that he is only a waste product is a belief shared by his sister as well, who comments: 'and at home in the summer [La Vache is] just a waste-product. He just sits around all day in the east wing,

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441 Wallace, David F. *The Broom of the System*. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Penguin, 1987. Web.

442 Smith, Marquard, and Joanne Morra. *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006. Print.

getting flapped and watching soap operas, and stuff like "The Flintstones", and carving designs in his leg' (324). The most unsettling aspect of La Vache's techno-animistic approach to the leg is that he is condemned to do that because, without the leg, he is deemed to be and deems himself to be a useless lump of flesh that is both intellectually and physically wasted. The compounding of leglessness with thinglessness or meaninglessness purports a social model of disability where social pressures cripple and enfreak people with disabilities. The anthropomorphisation of the leg in *TBOTS* is not simply a vehicle for far-fetched metaphors and synecdoches as explored in the preceding chapter, but is represented as embedded in the social and phenomenological substrate of disabilities.

A critical component propounded in *TBOTS* is its implicit laying bare of techno-fetishism. It is discernible that La Vache's surplus emotional investment in the leg overpowers all other priorities and facets of his life, yet he does not let go, for he is fully aware that the only difference between himself and his mentally unstable mother is that he is not thing-less, like her: 'Mom's head and my leg were taken out in the same dancing accident, after all. At least I got left with a thing. Mom's thingless' (399). Furthermore, his "slaving" efforts to feed, caress, and speak to the leg unearth displacements of desire and fantasy, that is, they demonstrate an inversion of his own longing to be cared for and attended to. This is also what connects enfreakment of the leg with techno-fetishism. In his seminal essay, *The Vulnerable Articulate*[443], Marquard Smith explores the idea of technology and the fetish. He succinctly puts forth fetishism as a phenomenon in which:

> inanimate, non-human, or partial objects are surinvested [or overvalued] to the exclusion of all other targets of desire to put it more simply … [it is] a decision to "turn away" from perverse and fetishistic practices as being exclusively sexual and to turn toward fetishistic objects (including the possibility of animating and animated objects as replacing our phantasmatic desire for the human body as a totalised union)… lead[ing] us into a malignant, which is to say an enduring investment in things that are not wholly human. (48)

For Marquard, object-fetishism entails an over– investment in objects that sustain our inherent desire to have a full and complete body. This practice not only maintains illusions of completeness but also engenders ill-founded fantasies of physical prowess, non-limitation, and transcendence over human

443Ibid,.

vulnerability. The excerpt also hints at the transition of techno-animism into techno-fetishism, where human artefacts (like prostheses) exceed their anthropomorphic significations and get embroiled in a play of perverted fantasies that are completely "unfleshed" from their anthropocentric and embodied orientations. Marquard's stance is unique in stipulating that object-fetishism constitutes the obliteration of all other targets and practices of desire in a bid to imbricate a single object with multiple desires, fantasies, and sexualities. In so being, techno or object fetishism becomes a truly symbolic exchange between human fantasies, desires, and objects. The symbolism embedded in techno-fetishism can take multiple forms: on one side, it can be an edifying commentary on the social reception of disabilities; whilst on the other, it can propel us towards fantasies of transcendence and alienation from our material embodied origins (the latter two shall be detailed at length in the forthcoming sections).

The first and relatively benign form of techno-fetishism is propounded in *TBOTS*– as already discussed, for La Vache, the leg is his *raison d'etre*– it is the only thing that sustains him. In fact, he is fully cognizant that the frontiers of his existence and identity are permanently confined within the leg: 'as the Antichrist I have a thing, and it's gloriously clear where I leave off and others start, and no one expects me to be anything other than what I am, which is a waste-product, slaving endlessly to support his leg' (397). Thus the enfreaking of the leg as fetish is indispensable to the characterisation of La Vache, for not only does the leg foreground his desperate striving for purpose, but in projecting him as an individual steeped in an overwhelming obsession with the prosthetic leg, Wallace alerts his readers to the eugenicist viewpoint in taxonomizing people with disabilities and impairments as "waste products" of civilisation whose Satanic or Antichrist physicality damns them to "uselessness".

This eugenicist perspective has been exalted by cyberneticists and Transhumanists such as Robert Ettinger, Alan Harrington, Max More, Hank Pellissier, and FM 2030[444], to name a few, whose engagement with embodied technology is fundamentally entrenched in allaying the fears of uselessness and human limitations. By endorsing a narrative of humanity's transcendence of its fundamental finitude in the face of physical and mental incapacities, disease and illness and finally, corporeality and morality, these theorists have unleashed an empty rhetoric in which technology is hailed to 'allow us to reconstitute ourselves physiologically, genetically, and neurologically' (More)[445]. According to the Los Angeles based transhumanist scholars called the Extropians, technology will allow us to seek:

444 He is an Iranian–American scholar, author, and Transhumanist whose original name was: Fereidoun M. Efandiary

445 Taken from Max Moore's "The Extropian Principles". Published in 1998. To access the full article visit: https://mrob.com/pub/religion/extro_prin.html

> More intelligence, wisdom and effectiveness, an unlimited lifespan, and the removal of political, cultural, biological, and psychological limits to self-actualization and self-realization. Perpetually overcoming constraints on our progress and possibilities. Expanding into the universe and advancing without end. (More)

It is apparent that Extropians are oblivious to the manifold complexities and adverse effects incumbent upon such a massive undertaking. The blind vigour for unlimited advancement segues into multiple variants of techno-fetishism that hinge upon the ethos of dematerialisation by a mode of transcendence intrinsically allied with alienation. The proceeding sections therefore examine techno-fetishism with reference to Max More's Extropian Principles, and Baudrillard's Simulation theory, and their implications for the cultural and intellectual understanding of prostheses, disabilities, and the body.

Techno-Fetishism as Transcendence: An Extropian Perspective

Transcendence configures as one of the most prominent human fantasies incessantly translated into contemporary conceptualisations of technology. The Extropian agenda 'to push beyond the merely human stage of evolution' begins with redeeming us from the deteriorations of entropy and limitations. In the extant milieu, transcendence of embodiment constitutes radical experimentation with the body. Performance artists like Stelarc, and Orlan, celebrity amputees like Aimee Mullins and some Paralympic athletes, are glaring examples of extreme manipulation of bodies and prosthetics. For instance, Stelarc's projects are an investigation into the possibilities of transcending our faulty and limited biological base. His performances with multiple prosthetic attachments consist of uploading the body into a cyberspace where muscle stimulation is triggered by a spatially removed computer; wearing an exoskeleton in which movements are executed partly by himself and the internet; and attaching an involuntary arm controlled by a computer system. Although these experiments severely compromise his agency, he still revels in its obliteration. In an interview with Ross Farnell, he comments upon the disintegration of individuality necessitated by his performances:

> To be individual means to be human, to lose our individuality means to be a machine, to be somehow sub-human. But consider a body with a multiplicity of agents. The pathology of that sort of a body, the pathology of our psycho-social development, might be split personalities, but the pathology of this multiple agency would be split physicalities, that would be not a pathology but rather a new complexity and multiplicity of choice that one would have. You would watch a part of your body move,

> you are not responsible for that movement. Electronically coupled other bodies are extruding their own agency from one place to another and are being manifested in a part of your body… somehow this results in a kind of an anamorphous Internet collectivity of physical bodies, but rather a physical body with a multiplicity of agents and a new complexity of operation where your awareness will neither be all here, nor all there. (134-35)

In Stelarc's work too, the loss of individual autonomy is hailed as a singular feature of such body-technology mergers. The techno-fetishist hankering for transcendence of corporeal imperfections and limitations fails to materialise the same liberatory effects when applied to the lives of ordinary individuals – or to people with disabilities for whom autonomous embodied technology becomes a cause of anxiety, physical exhaustion and discomfort. An example of this is the user experience of Functional Electronic Stimulation (FES) technology: its function is to mobilise paralysed limbs by using computer stimulation, where the electrodes attached to the non-paralysed muscles send computer generated signals to those in the paralysed parts thereby triggering the muscle into action. Originally touted to afford "dignity of appearance" (Cartwright and Goldfarb, 136), the early users of FES technology deemed it physically exhausting because 'unlike nature…the machine overstimulates muscles, leaving users exhausted after short distances' (136). Another drawback of the FES was that the device 'had a mind of its own…and the wearers had to learn to anticipate and accommodate to the system' (136), rather than vice versa. In light of the failed promise held by FES technology, Joseph Shapiro commented that 'only in a society that equates a wheelchair with tragedy…would such technological puppetry be viewed with the optimism that has driven continued work on FES technology' (137-38)[446]. Thus, Stelarc's model of "split personalities" and "internet collectivities" falls short of the mark when put into practice in the phenomenal world of embodiment and technology. This rhetoric of transcendence is flawed not only in its inherent eugenicist undergirding but also for its focus on non-anthropocentric, autonomous technology, because it goes against their primary hyper-material nature. According to Crawford, deeply embodied technologies 'are imagined and constructed with 'user representatives' in mind' (Crawford 8)[447] and in so being, they are 'always negotiated in-use both deliberately and as a consequence of the recalcitrant nature of the body'.

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446 Smith, Marquard, and Joanne Morra. *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006. Print.

447 Crawford, Cassandra S. Phantom Limb : Amputation, Embodiment, and Prosthetic Technology. 2014. Web.

This section therefore extends arguments around the ongoing negotiation between bodies and prostheses and makes a case for thinking of transcendence in terms of "hypermateriality"– as opposed to superhuman overcoming. Germane to this discussion will be the memoirs, Josh Sundquist's *Just Don't Fall* (2010), Lauren Scruggs's *Still LoLo: A Spinning Propeller, a Horrific Accident, and a Family's Journey of Hope* (2013); April De Angelis's biographical drama *Soft Vengeance* (1984); R.V Cassill's short story *The Father* (1962), and Robert Pobi's crime thriller *City of Windows* (2019). The range of these selected texts is intended to demonstrate the hyper-material and fluid aspects of a variety of prosthetic body parts like legs, hands, and eyes. As a way of introducing points of contrast, these literary and auto/biographical depictions will be compared with the imagistic representations of the mainstream and even iconic amputee, Aimee Mullins, whose futurist imaginings of body-technology collaborations have drastically transformed the face of prosthetic technology and its cyborgian discourse. First, the American Paralympian, comedian and author Josh Sundquist's memoir *Just Don't Fall* offers a fitting gateway into navigate the contradictory dialectics engrained in media hyped athleticism where on one side we see the rapid strides towards the idea of transcendence in overcoming the body, whilst on the other, there is a discernible process of transcendence facilitated through proper rehabilitation and assimilation.

Sundquist's memoir responds to the latter half of this discourse. It details his journey as a young cancer survivor who lost his leg to Ewing's Sarcoma – a form of metastatic cancer – at the age of ten and his subsequent selection for the ski team of the 2006 Paralympics. His autobiography resonates with instances where he faces difficulties in performing the usual kinetic activities with his prosthesis; he emphasizes the feeling of his prosthetic leg as not only eerily uncomfortable, but also much heavier than the "real one". He recounts:

> My fake leg when it is finished, is very uncomfortable. This is surprising since the leg costs as much as a fancy car, and fancy cars are very, very comfortable. The leg wraps around the middle of my body like a one–inch thick diaper made out of hard plastic. The place where my leg was removed … is still very sore because it is still healing, so it hurts, to have the hard plastic against it.
>
> My fake leg is very heavy. The prosthetist said it actually only weighs ten pounds, which he said is half as much as my real leg weighed before it got cut off. But when I still had my real leg, I didn't ever think, "Wow, this leg is really

> heavy, I would like to take it off". But that's what I think about all the time when I wear my fake one. (82)[448]

The uncomfortable feeling of the leg is augmented by the perpetual difficulty in walking and running because 'the prosthesis won't swing through fast enough to do the normal run' (84); also in his inability to ski after full leg amputation (for which he needs to resort to using his crutches),and lastly, in the cosmetic limitations of the prosthetic leg which manifest in the wrinkling of the knee when he bends down. It is apparent that Sundquist's prosthetic limb was failing him on almost every count of mundane human functioning, let alone superhuman overcoming. His quest towards competing in the 2006 Paralympics is rife with failures, accidents, fallings and rigorous training. In fact, his very first race has ended in a debacle: 'I fell. I fell! I fell! I fell! I fell! How could this happen? How did I fall in my first race? I am great skier destined for national and international glory' (188). In light of the obstacles he has faced, his story becomes one where transcendence configures as a tale of working with and through individual limitations without pomp and \ or Extropian fervour.

Sundquist's phenomenological account puts into question the wave of techno-fetishism imbued in the advertising strapline for the 2012 Paralympics that announced: 'Forget everything you thought you knew about strength. Forget everything you thought you knew about humans. It's time to do battle. Meet the superhumans' (Kuppers 164)[449]. The Extropian undergirding of the tagline has been maximally realised by the Paralympic athlete and model Aimee Mullins, whose technocentric portrayals disseminate an image culture of endless glamour, seamless prostheticisation and "technological high"[450]. A first glimpse of this is instantiated by Mullins's exorbitant collection of prostheses:

> Mullins's personal collection of artificial limbs includes not only running blades and art pieces, but also a range of various silicone lifelike legs. Some of them were developed specifically to fit her favorite shoes: "Each pair of fake legs is designed to be worn with a different heel height. I take the shoes to Bob [the prosthetist] and he makes me legs to go with them" (cited in Vainshtein 2012, 140). A quote from one of her interviews reads, "I have a suitcase just full of legs because I need options for

448 Sundquist, Josh. *Just Don't Fall*. New York: Penguin Books, 2010. Print.

449 Kuppers, Petra. *Disability, Arts and Culture: Methods and Approaches*. Chicago: Chicago Press, 2019. Web.

450 Smith, Marquard, and Joanne Morra. *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006. Print.

> different clothing" (cited in Vainshtein 2012, 139). Elsewhere, she suggests that her artificial legs are akin to those of a Barbie doll: they are designed specifically to be worn with heels (Mullins 2018). (202–3)[451]

Notwithstanding the "element of fantasy" (Pullin 31)[452], Mullin's sundry collection of body parts is still not without its affordances, for it heralds proliferation of choice, which in itself is a technological and cultural innovation that allows prosthesis wearers to become active consumers and 'to imagine themselves as a part of the ordinary, albeit consumerist, world rather than as a special class of excluded untouchables and unviewables' (Thomson 96)[453]. Simultaneously, it unleashes a new glamorous aesthetic to design, distinct from the anachronistic and stringent medical benchmarks. However, behind these obvious advantages of Mullins's portrayals, there also lurks a technocentric fantasy and fetish for surpassing the humdrum realities of living with prosthesis. For instance, her "cheetah legs", "Barbie legs", and "glass legs"[vi] (Fig 4.6, Pg. 270) only correspond to glamour, glitz and speed, and fail to be of much ordinary functional utility. Her Cheetah legs that were designed to give her maximum speed while sprinting, conveniently hide the 'human cost of such…focused animal power' (35). In an article in *International Design Magazine*, Mullins states that while posing with the legs in a photoshoot, 'the photographer has to hold me and kind of prop me in position before I fall over' (Goldwasser 35)[454]. In the same vein, Mullins's Barbie legs, and glass legs surpass everyday practical concerns – they are only touted as "fantasy legs" and "perfect female legs". As highlighted previously, this thesis is in agreement with the positive side of the glamourisation of prosthetic body parts, but ethical problems arise when the narrative of Extropian transcendence extirpates the anthropocentric roots of prosthesis and transforms fashion into fetish.

Fashion, Fetish and Expressive Prostheses

The fine line between fashion and fetish is manifest in Lauren Scruggs's memoir, *Still LoLo: A Spinning Propeller, a Horrific Accident, and a Family's Journey of Hope* (2013), where she recounts her experiences of wielding artificial hands and eyes after her accident with an aircraft propeller in

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451 Burton, Laini, and Jana Melkumova-Reynolds. "'My Leg Is a Giant Stiletto Heel': Fashioning the ProsthetisedBody." *Fashion Theory*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2019, pp. 195–218.

452 Ibid,.

453 Garland-Thomson, R. "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory." In Gendering Disability, edited by Smith, Bonnie G., and Hutchison, Beth. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UP, 2004. Print

454 Ibid,.

2011. Scruggs was a fashion blogger and stylist at the time of the incident. Her mounting anxiety about her career prospects in the fashion industry post amputation are vividly rendered in the book:

> I worried about my career. How was I supposed to type quickly with only one hand? How was I ever going to blend in at Fashion Week so I could interview models? I couldn't picture myself next to all those beautiful fashion industry insiders. I felt nervous about spring and summer approaching. I didn't want to go outside without long sleeves. I didn't want to be seen in public. The bottom line was that I was never going to be normal again. That's what I told myself. Normalcy, as I'd known it, was long gone. I wanted to lock "myself in my bedroom and never come out again. (414)[455]

Scruggs's account is strewn with despondent existential feelings. She is well aware that normalcy– as she had envisaged it – is now irretrievable. She wonders, 'how was I going to water-ski or go rock climbing or box with only one glove? How was I supposed to drive with only one eye? Or dress myself with one hand? Or style my hair, or open a jar of pickles? I was sure no guy would ever think I was attractive again – much less want to marry me' (101). Scruggs's continually shrinking zone of activities and her overwhelming feeling of disorientation are radically removed from the celebratory hum of the celebrity image culture. This is evident in the conundrum she faces while getting her arm prosthesis. She recounts that 'the majority of people who lose limbs are guys … so all the model arms were male, with hair on them' (438). Moreover, analogous to Mullins, she too procures a collection of prosthetic arms 'since each would look and function much differently' (438). Her limb collection comprises four different kinds of prostheses:

> One is called the "passive." It looks the most realistic, with fingernails and natural skin color. The hand doesn't move at all, but I figured I could use it for professional settings, like going to Fashion Week or attending formal events. (439)

> The next arm moves electronically and allows me to hold on to things. It's considered a good, everyday hand. It looks slightly realistic, and it can be used to open a jar or even open a door. The muscles in my forearm make the hand move. By pushing up or down on the muscles, I can make the hand open or close. I got to the point where I

455 Scruggs, Lauren. *Still LoLo: A Spinning Propeller, a Horrific Accident, and a Family's Journey of Hope*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.,Illinois: 2013. Web.

> could use the sample arm pretty easily. The last two arms I chose are for recreation. The first is a workout hand/arm that is versatile and can adapt to lots of activities. Different pieces can attach to it, depending on the activity. For instance, it has a clasp at the end that could be used to hold a ski rope. Second, I selected a pink swim sleeve that wraps around my arm like a sock. I felt okay about that. (440)

Scruggs's arm collection is teleologically different from that of Mullins. Her arms are neither high fashion nor "off the charts glamourous"[456], instead they serve different practical and social functions. In conjunction, they also show that we are more intimately aligned with our hands, because in concomitance with fulfilling muscular activities, they enable us to caress, touch and feel the world. The dearth of a prosthetic hand that assimilates all hand-oriented functionalities rationalises why most people prefer not to wear them in private and find even a look alike one an uncanny appendage. Graham Pullin makes some intriguing remarks on this conundrum when he opines that the intimacy of arms to everyday human activities makes them hard to design. He writes that 'any hand, even a prosthetic one, is not just a tool to hold things in but also an instrument of communication and expression' (37)[457]. In that, our gestures could be both communicative and artistic– for example while performing a dance sequence– and thus they go beyond the simple tenets of appearance and prehensile functioning. Despite these intricacies, 'there are only two common [design] approaches: those of *realism* and *functionalism*' (37)[458]. Pullin expounds:

> The realistic approach is defined as a visual imitation of a human arm, and so the materials are chosen for their ability to be formed to visually represent human skin: PVC plastic and silicone in shades of pink and brown with molded wrinkles, nails, and sometimes even veins. (37)[459]

In effect, the functional side of the spectrum answers to facilitating the standard prehensile functioning of the arm: "the grasping or holding of objects" (37)[460]. These approaches fail to supply a single arm that incorporates everything that a human arm can do without posing personally unnerving and socially mortifying obstacles. Pullin discusses how 'some amputees have mentioned their embarrassment when giving directions in the street or waving at a friend using a clenched grip rather

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456 A quote from Mullins's interview in, *Wearable Body Organs: Critical Cognition Becomes (Again) Somatic* Kelly Dobson Computing Culture Group MIT Media Lab 20 Ames Street Bldg.

457 Pullin, Graham. *Design Meets Disability*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2009. Web.

458 Ibid,.

459Ibid,.

460Ibid,.

than a pointing finger or an open palm' (60). The supplanting of a "clenched grip" instead of pointed finger is also due to the fact that most amputees use split hooks or the "Dreyfuss Arm"[461] to perform prehensile jobs. The hand is shaped like a clenched steel fist that looks more like an industrial contraption than a human hand. To add to the distress the immovable fingers of the hand make it look like a visually static or thing-like embodied attachment. The practise of discounting the validity of gestures in hand making raises an alarm for those amputees who use Sign language and for whom the loss of their hands signifies loss of all communication and language that even a prosthetic hand cannot mend.

Not only does this confound our fantasies of transcendence but also brings to the fore the indispensability of incorporating ergonomics in prosthesis design. Ergonomics responds to the visceral feeling of the body part as opposed to the simple dictum of cosmesis and pragmatics. This feature also takes into account the feeling of performing hand related activities. The logic of ergonomics orients seamlessly with the philosopher Matthew Ratcliffe's framework of "existential feelings of being", which details an insightful account of the inaccessible feelings that sustain the background of our everyday bearings in life. The thought-provoking nature of this proposition is that it considers not only the factual and accessible proprioceptive and kinaesthetic awareness[462], but also the largely non-factual interoceptive mechanisms that govern our emotional states. According to Ratcliffe, these existential feelings 'are both feelings of the body and ways of finding oneself in the world' (2)[463]. In the wake of an amputation, this steady backdrop of existential feelings is ruptured, and it is the fundamental function of an ergonomic approach to reorganise the fragmented existential feelings and reconcile the past with the present– as crucial parts of rehabilitation.

The most promising route to accomplish this is by making expressive prosthesis: 'these prostheses do not hide limb loss, or try to correspond to the flesh and blood appearance, rather they customise the … prosthetic body part to suit the aesthetic preferences of the prosthesis wearers'(200)[464]. Scruggs's prosthetic hand, designed by Advanced Arm Dynamics, is a bespoke expressive prosthesis that was crafted in her favourite colours. She writes:

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461 On page number 267

462 Both explored in the preceding chapters.

463 Ratcliffe, Matthew. *Feelings of Being : Phenomenology, Psychiatry, and the Sense of Reality*. Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

464 Expressive prosthesis, as discussed by Burton and Melkumova–Reynolds, Burton in, "My Leg Is a Giant Stiletto Heel": Fashioning the Prosthetised Body." Fashion Theory 23.2 (2019): 195-218. Web.

Visit Alternative Limb Project, and Allele Canada website to know more about these:

https://thealternativelimbproject.com/ (Accessed on 13 March 2021)

https://alleles.ca/ (Accessed on 13 March 2021)

> I thought I'd hate my workout swim arm because it looks so much like a machine. But the day I went to pick it up, I got a pleasant surprise. The designers at Advanced Arm Dynamics had studied LOLO Magazine to see what the current color trends are and then designed this arm specially for me. It's pink and green– two of my favorite colors. Designing it with me in mind was such a thoughtful gesture, and besides that, this arm doesn't pretend to be more than it actually is. It is a machine, it looks like a machine, and that's okay. Not only that, but it enables me to work out– something fun that I love doing. (464)

Akin to a fashion statement, Scruggs's "expressive prosthesis"[465] is a manifestation of her choices, preferences and desires, rather than the obliteration of her personality under cyborgian myth making. In fact, the glamorous side of her prosthesis deliberately "enfreaks" the hand, by making it stand out as part of her identity and appearance. In doing so, it positively goads her towards more adaptive prosthetisation, while also 'draw[ing] attention to the very source of the perceived [stigma]: the limb absence' (Marquard 28)[466], without overinvestment in a misdirected rhetoric of technological liberation or transcendence from embodiment.

Instead of alluding to an Extropian transcendence, these phenomenological and literary accounts of living with prosthesis beckon to hyper-reflexive and hyper-material tendencies of body-technology mergers. In these two tendencies also reside the subtle transmutations of the three phases of prosthetic rehabilitation, namely: the "uncanny valley", "prosthetic territory", and "vanishing point". The next section therefore attempts to elucidate this transitional process in order to bring to the fore the vital human-centric attribute of embodied technology in conjunction with the endless plasticity of human cognition.

"The Uncanny Valley"; "The Prosthetic Territory"; and "The Vanishing Point": An Examination of Prosthesis Assimilation

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465 Expressive prosthesis, as discussed by Burton and Melkumova–Reynolds, signify those prosthesis that do not hide limb loss, or try to correspond to the flesh and blood appearance, rather they customise the exterior of the body part to suit the aesthetic preferences of the prosthesis wearers. Visit Alternative Limb Project, and Allele Canada website to know more about these:
https://thealternativelimbproject.com/ (Accessed on 13 March 2021)
https://alleles.ca/ (Accessed on 13 March 2021)

466 Smith, Marquard, and Joanne Morra. *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006. Print.

The "uncanny valley" marks the primary phase of rehabilitation; it is the untoward confrontation with limb loss, and a new prosthetic part. As the name suggests, in this preliminary phase, the prosthetic appendage seems foreign and strange. April de Angelis's play *Soft Vengeance* is a glaring portrayal of this uncanny valley. The play is an adaptation of the freedom fighter Albie Sachs's autobiography of the same name. First performed in 1993, it revolves around Sachs's recovery after a car bomb explosion that took his right arm and left eye. The most intriguing facet of the play is the division now of Albie's ego into two; he is perpetually in conversation with the two halves of his psyche– called Albie and Albie 2– that also perpetually invalidate each other. This comes to the fore when Sachs feels the absence of his right arm in the form of phantom limb sensation:

> ALBIE: What is it now?
>
> ALBIE2: I felt it. A ghostly tingling… like my fingers were clenched into a fist.
>
> ALBIE: It's all your imagination. Phantom limb they call it.
>
> ALBIE: Phantom!
>
> ALBIE: It's gone. Along with my watch, my signature and the callus on my finger where I held my pen. (107)[467]

Albie is well aware that the loss of the right arm is also the loss of his writing skills and signature and the first encounter brings with it visceral thoughts of the practical ramifications of armlessness. The dehiscence of Albie's psyche into two subjects heightens the mental and physical crises he is going through because the link between the past and present has gone awry. This symbolises the fragmentation of his "feelings of being" in the world, where Sachs's embodiment and psyche have completely disintegrated, disrupting his feeling of attunement with the world– a condition that is further exacerbated by the prosthetic arm. When Albie sees the new arm, he examines it reluctantly:

> *Albie gets up slowly and fetches the bag with the arm in it. He does so carefully. Surreptitiously. He puts the bag down on the bed, looks at it. Unzips bag. However he cannot summon up the enthusiasm to take the arm out. He lies back down, curls himself up protectively. Albie 2 enters. He looks in the bag. (128–129)*

467 Angelis, de April. " Soft Vengeance". *Graeae Play's1: New Plays Redefining Disability*. Chippenham: Aurora Metro Press, 2002. Print.

He finally tries the hand and flippantly wonders at how well it behaves at being a real one:

> ALBIE: You wouldn't know. From a distance.
>
> ALBIE 2: Well
>
> ALBIE: A real hand feels, it touches. You make love with a hand, greet, negotiate. It's your anger, your instinct, imagination. It doesn't pretend to be a hand, it is one. (129)

The "uncanny valley" is precisely the juncture where the fake arm comes across as a spurious proxy of the real one. Albie is unable to assimilate the arm to his body image, for him it is one thing to see oneself permanently armless but it's entirely another to integrate a detachable body part into one's self-image. Eventually, Albie completely forsakes the use of his arm and goes in the world armless and eyeless. In the end, he is unable to transcend the uncanny valley– aversion for the prosthetic– because he knows that even if the prosthetic looked like the biological arm to the world, he would still be able to tell the difference, and the prosthetic would remain detached from him forever:

> I just wanted to be me again, exactly as before. I would wear a prosthetic arm and then what would be the difference? who could tell the difference? Only me. Me. I would be able to tell. And when I listened to myself I heard a new voice. It said that it was the important one. And in the very personal matter of myself I must please myself. I would be Albie without an arm and an eye and I would move freely in the world proud and unashamed. And I could say this is who I am. (139)

The "uncanny valley" could also be a two-pronged phenomenon in that it can also be experienced by those who perceive people with prostheses as bearers of uncanny and unfeeling tools. This is depicted in RV Casill's short story *The Father*; it is a poignant rendition of a father's guilt at having to voluntarily amputate his son's hand as the only possible way to rescue him from death. The narrative unfolds when Cory Johnson, the protagonist, is working on his farm, driving the corn sheller, when his four-year-old son Bobbie accidentally ends up inserting his hand in the gears. In the midst of the ensuing turmoil, Cory amputates Bobbie's crushed arm to save his life; the doctors commend him for his incredibly wise decision and the neat job of amputation. But despite his benign motivation, Cory is unable to surmount the guilt of mutilating his own son until he amputates his own arm by inserting

it in the corn sheller. Interspersed with the potent depiction of paternal guilt is Cory's perception of Bobbie's prosthetic arm as an unfeeling metal accessory that is capable of expressing love but 'without the ability of knowing it' (149)[468]. That is, for Cory, the prosthetic hand is a cold lifeless object that is incapable of receiving sensations of human touch. When Bobbie cradles his baby with the prosthesis, 'Cory's thoughts were often busy on conjectures as to whether the baby ought to mind being touched by the lifeless thing' (143). As an onlooker, Cory found it 'odd how Bobbie could use it to caress [his baby] sometimes, as if it were alive, though of course it had no sense of touch. It could express feeling though it had none' (143). Here the uncanny valley manifests as a shift from the wearer to the observer who is unable to transcend and assimilate the appearance of "Bobbie's well-wrought hook" on his human hands. Such feelings in the spectator take no account of the phenomenal feelings of the prosthesis wearers who, in the case of Bobbie, are able to perform most activities with the hand with seamless alacrity.

Being the first stage of rehabilitation, the "uncanny valley" not only signifies non-transcendence from amputation and prosthesis, but if overcome, is followed by a strenuous journey towards retraining the disintegrated embodied enactivist circuits. This second phase of prosthesis incorporation is called the "prosthetic territory", in which hyper-reflexivity, training and failure, form a triangulated whole. This reading adapts Erin O'Connor's conception of the prosthetic territory and argues for the relevance of this concept in rehabilitation therapy and everyday prosthesis use. According to Connor, 'at the body-machine interface lies a "prosthetic territory", a frontier of potential resistance whose liberatory effects derive, paradoxically, from a strategic complicity with and dependence on machines' (106)[469]. The prosthetic territory marks the renegotiation between difficult technology and recalcitrant bodies, the success of which depends upon active learning and mutual co-operation.

This is apparent in Robert Pobi's crime thriller *City of Windows* (2019), in which the protagonist Lucas Page has lost his eye, a leg and an arm in an accident when he was working for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Even in the midst of an unfolding criminal investigation and cascading crimes, Pobi does not lose sight of Lucas's prosthetised body. There are several instances showcasing Page's

468 Cassill, R. V. "The Father". *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*. 3th ed. New York: Norton, 1978. Print.

469 O'Connor, Eric. *Raw Material: Producing Pathology in Victorian Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000. Print.

troubles with his prosthetics, one of them is his constant readjustment with the prosthetic eye, which is cosmetically perfect but immobile:

> His good eye somehow had perfect mobility … But the orbit that housed his prosthetic had been put back together with a few titanium brackets and a beautiful ceramic insert, handcrafted by an artist in Okinawa. Problem was, it had zero motility, and whenever he shifted his gaze, he had to move his entire head; otherwise, the disjointed chameleon effect made it appear as if the tubes in his head were overheating, and it freaked some folks out …which led to his habit of wearing sunglasses in public– inside and out. Lucas understood that a few of his new and improved physical traits voyaged well into the uncanny valley and began to scale the far side. (60)[470]

This fictional recounting of adjustments with the prosthetic eye coalesces with that of Scruggs. She remarks that her plastic prosthetic eye did not 'move as fast as [her] other eye' (436). She was then referred to other clients 'who have learned to compensate for having an artificial eye' (436) by blinking each time they looked round in different directions. She adds that 'getting a prosthetic eye involves both the process of fitting the eye and then learning how to use it. Overall, getting a prosthetic eye was a positive, encouraging experience' (437). The aligning of the fictional and autobiographical illustrations of the prosthetic eye shows that Pobi does not deploy prosthetics as a vehicle for literary metaphorization or posthuman veneration. In fact, such depictions are akin to apprising and informing the readers that the human agent is still the organising entity behind the act of successfully wielding a prosthesis and that sensible design relies upon modelling as close as possible the individual living human body.

Such renditions are critical in comprehending the function of the "prosthetic territory" not as a rhetoric of the transcendence of embodiment, but as an axis through which the body and machine mutually coincide with each other. This is primarily why Scruggs tries to assimilate the prosthetic hand to her kinetic repertoire even though she continues to see the hand and her body as two separate frontiers:

> In fact, I accepted my other prosthetic arms far more easily because each one served a purpose. Even though my passive arm couldn't move at all, I liked having the option of

470 Pobi, Robert. *City of Windows*. New York: Menotaur Books, 2019. Web.

> wearing something that looked so much like a real arm. I knew it would help me blend in at Fashion Week and other industry events. I thought I'd hate my workout swim arm because it looks so much like a machine.

It is crucial to realise that she is presented as complacent with the hands because each catered to an individual human function, as opposed to being an independent agential artefact. In so being, the hand and Scruggs did not form an agglomerate of split-agencies– as Stelarc would say– rather, they are an example of the biocompatibility of machines with the human body in which the former is designed to 'share the physical qualities' (143)[471] of the latter. This is congruent with Andy Clark's claim that deeply embodied technology– even if it requires modest or strenuous training to mould it into human skill set– is nonetheless human-centered as it 'exploits the natural strengths of human brains and bodies' (38)[472]. This is also true of the aesthetic attributes of the Scruggs's hand, because unlike that of Albie, it never pretended to be a human hand, instead it looked and behaved like a machine with functional qualities of a biological one.

In the last stage of rehabilitation, termed the "vanishing point", the prosthesis is more profoundly incorporated into the body schema and body image of its wearer, so much so that the latter may not even be conscious of wielding it. Vivian Sobhchack's quote from her phenomenal essay 'A Leg to Stand On' illustrates the vanishing point by alluding to the sense of ease and fluidity in using her prosthetic leg:

> I primarily sense my leg as an active, quasi-absent "part" of my whole body . . . I do not feel the object "place" where the flesh of my stump ends and the material of my prosthesis begins. Indeed, whether I am sitting or walking, there seems only the slightest difference, the merest "echo," between my two legs. Rather, their expressive reciprocity, their mirroring each of the other … is perceived as a general "seamlessness." … My diffused "phantom" both figuratively and functionally elongated and grew into the hollow of my prosthetic socket– occupying, thickening and

471 Smith, Marquard, and Joanne Morra. *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006. Print.

472 Clark, Andy. *Natural-born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Web.

> sub-stantiating it, finally "grasping" it so that it made sense to me and became corporeally integrated and lived as my own body. (59)[473]

The vanishing point is the stage at which prosthesis use is subsumed under fluidity and forgetfulness. This is the ideal form of transcendence in which 'amputated *bodies* and "adjusting" *minds* or psyches… welcome affiliations with prostheses' (Crawford 18)[474]. One of the characters in the play *Soft Vengeance*– named Woman– offers such an insight. She finds her artificial right arm an extremely useful tool that has made tasks like ironing so much easier and more manageable. She tells Albie to 'ride the hiccups. It's well worth it in the end' (131). This is precisely where stark differences between techno-fetishism and techno-synergism arise because the latter answers to successful 'prosthetization… [that] restor[es] mobility, independence, and productivity while staving off' (131) the deleterious Extropian postulates. These synergistic body-technology partnerships bring to the fore the value of considering a "transductive approach" in designing prosthetic technology. Bernard Stiegler outlines this method in the first two books of *Technics and Time,* in which he defines prostheticity as a human pursuit that is outside of oneself. In this observation, he is also declaring that human beings are defined by the tools they use, and thus, in his eyes, the condition of prostheticity becomes the exteriorisation of interiorisation, a condition of distributed being. He remarks how, 'the interior and the exterior are the same thing, the inside is the outside, since man (the interior) is essentially defined by the tool (the exterior)' (146)[475]. A critical insight of Stiegler's "prostheticity" is his emphasis on forgetfulness of tool use: 'and yet, from the beginning there is a constitutive blindness and forgetting that is the mark of … being technical, as doubling-up' (199). In other words, he elucidates that humans also want to be non-conscious of their tool use– through their technical outputs individuals aspire to be unaware of and fluid in how they wield their prosthesis. Even though Stiegler intermingles his thesis with ideas of temporality and historicity, still it will be efficacious in assessing the logic of rehabilitative prosthetisation.

Andy Clark's notions of "natural born cyborgs" and "super-sizing the mind" are pertinent extensions to those of Stiegler because the former highlights the relevance of human body and cognition in our "cyborgisation" through machines and he never loses sight of the fact that ideal

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473 Ibid,.

474 Crawford, Cassandra S. *Phantom Limb : Amputation, Embodiment, and Prosthetic Technology*. 2014. Biopolitics; 16. Web.

475 Stiegler, Bernard. *Technics and Time.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1998. Print.

human–machine symbiosis hinges upon 'the potential of technology to become integrated so deeply and fluidly with our existing biological capacities and characteristics that we feel no boundary between ourselves and the nonbiological elements' (24)[476], and that 'such extensions should not be thought of as rendering us in any way post-human; not because they are not deeply transformative but because we humans are naturally designed to be the subjects of just such repeated transformations!' (142)[477] since we have been doing so since the inception of civilization. In light of these remarks, the myths of Extropianism, super-human transcendence and cyborgisation, seem too far-fetched and fantastical to bear any weight. Nonetheless, the overwhelming ubiquity of techno-centric images makes it difficult to circumvent the fantasies they conjure and disseminate. Moreover, by stoking the most primary human insecurities– that of mortality and finitude– it fuels the desire to overcome limitations and to reverse entropy. Arguably, this is why our defences against these tempting fantasies are tenuous and fragile to say the least.

This techno-fetishist image culture has not only glamourised our vision of technology but also the derogatory status of corporeality as an impediment in need of complete obliteration by transcendence. Either that or its absolute erasure through extreme experimental surgery has saturated the body as an abstract bearer of "cultural signs" or as a manipulable skin database. The latter is at display in the performance artist Orlan's surgical interventions taking place through a series of operations that would change the appearance of her body and face. These drastic plastic surgeries were intended to redeem her from the limitations of her "ugly face and body" (Goodall 160)[478]. Orlan took inspiration from Greek mythology and crafted her features after the mythic images of gods and goddesses. The unlimited self-inflicted mutations of her appearance are, in her own words 'a struggle against nature: the innate, the inexorable, the programmed, Nature, DNA,… and God!' (152). According to Orlan, insecurities about one's body are part of a universal human condition, but they can now be redeemed by technology. Orlan's surgeries resonate with the dialectics of techno-fetishism as alienation; it is an inevitable consequence of transcendence, but is also quite distinct from it. For here one does not overcome or supersede the body, but one continually erases it and tailors its flesh and blood orientations in pursuit of an unreal and simulated image that bears no correspondence with any verifiable models of reality. In this next section, the final dimension of techno-fetishism and prosthesis, what I am referring to as "hyper reality" or "simulation" is examined. The focus here is to analyse

476 Clark, Andy. *Natural-born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Web.

477 Ibid,.

478 Featherstone, Mike. *Body Modification*. London: SAGE, 2000. Print.

some of the ways in which hyper-materiality shapes embodied technology when the body itself is entirely altered after an image of an image.

Techno-Fetishism as Alienation: Image Culture, Simulation, and Hyper reality

As a matter of fact, insecurities play a major role in how we fashion ourselves visually, thus it is hardly surprising to observe that Orlan is not alone in her frantic attempts to extirpate and edit the natural body. In a recent article in *The Guardian,* entitled, "Brazilian Butt Lift: behind the world's most dangerous cosmetic surgery" published in February 2021, the author, Sophie Elmhirst, recounts the recent surge in Brazilian Butt Lift surgery[479]. She observes that notwithstanding high mortality rates, women are persistently opting for the procedure. The reason behind these desperate measures is the insecurity of not having what is perceived to be a perfect body. Like Orlan, who modelled herself after the Greek deities, the quest for the perfect bottom 'is down to one woman … Kim Kardashian West'[480]. The article stipulates that the fetish for the perfect derrière is founded upon an illusory and transient image:

> The perfect bottom is also an angle: 45 degrees from the base of the spine to the top of the buttocks. In that sense, the perfect bottom is really the result of having the perfect spine, the kind that naturally protrudes at its base. According to a paper by a group of evolutionary psychologists published in the journal Evolution and Human Behaviour in 2015, "men tended to prefer women exhibiting cues to a degree of vertebral wedging closer to optimum". (ibid.)

In the current climate, the abstract picture of angular spinal jutting is the ruling axiom of physical perfection. Moreover, the motivations behind the surgical procedure reveal social pressure and feelings of inadequacy. In so being, the narrative not only fails to show that independent human will and individuality have any part to play here, but it also lacks Orlan's celebratory note. On the contrary, the article obliquely suggests that erasure of feigned physical imperfections does not really redeem us from the burden of physicality but make us succumb to increasing anxieties concerning its wear and tear.

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479 "It is a highly complicated surgery in which fat is removed from various parts of the body and then injected back into the buttocks".

480 Elmhirst, Melissa. "Brazilian Butt Lift: behind the world's most dangerous cosmetic surgery". The Guardian. com, The Guardian, 9 Feb 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/feb/09/brazilian-butt-lift-worlds-most-dangerous-cosmetic-surgery. 11 March 2021.

This is apparent in the story of Melissa, who obtained a second Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) because she started noticing dimples and bumps on her rear:

> "But here," said Melissa, pressing the dip she could see in her right buttock, a flaw she'd noticed while on holiday. "Can you see?"
>
> Like anyone inspecting their own body, Melissa could see things no one else could see. She wasn't seeing just its current form in the mirror, but multiple versions: her former body, her desired body, her digital body (ibid.).

This anecdote evinces that the fetish to erase, correct and perfect the body through surgery is neither glamorously "blasphemous" nor artistic, but is rather a frenetic endeavour to hide, displace and misdirect a wider social and emotional malaise linked to the present-day image culture that thrives on human insecurity. Moreover, it is intriguing to note that Melissa's quest for a shapely bottom is both rooted in and directed towards a melange of three images in particular, that collide with each other: the inflated image of her natural "imperfect" hips; the illusory image of the perfect "Brazilian Butt" popularised by mainstream media; and finally, the digitised image of the desired outcome post procedure. This is suggestive of the seductive appeal of reducing the body to an alterable database, where the 'body…changes in accordance with the irreversible 'progress' of technology, and …its overall scheme…undergoes metamorphosis' (Baudrillard 120)[481]. This metamorphosis is dictated by a complex network of images that continues to spawn and expand with utter disregard for the physical limitations of natural bodies. This is the zone of Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality and simulation in which our shared sense of reality is seen to be cemented by proliferating images and media representations 'that refer primarily to other media' (Kellner 63)[482] and images 'rather than to any outside world' (63)[483] or material reality. Baudrillard's theory of simulation and hyperreality is germane to the question of understanding techno-fetishism as alienation, for it affords a systematic framework for the analysis of the delimitations of expressive prosthesis especially when the original model of the body is replaced by an ever elusive and precipitously evolving network of images. These features of Baudrillard's theoretical corpus will also aid in establishing the demarcations of Andy Clarke's premises– concerning the "natural born cyborgs" and "supersizing the mind"– outlined above,

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481 Baudrillard, Jean. *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena.* London: Verso, 1993. Print

482 Kellner, Douglas. *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and beyond*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989. Print..

483 Ibid,.

thereby qualitatively calibrating the degree to which one can customise one's expressive prosthesis, and supersize one's mind and body towards fluidity – rather than towards the erasure of limitations.

J.G Ballard's *Crash* (1973), and Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love* (1989) each delineate the nefarious side of obsessive bodily modifications linked to accidents and voluntary amputations respectively. Both novels belong to the genre of fantasy fiction, where *Crash* is usually situated in the category of sci-fi, and *Geek Love* in that of the crip grotesque[484]. The most intriguing aspect of each is how they depict extreme bodily mutilations that fetishise the allure of technology and physical aberrancy, and the grotesque (Mitchell and Snyder 162)[485]. Ballard's *Crash* portrays an erotic alliance between technology and the body in the context of a fantastic hyperreal world. The novel is written as a first-person eyewitness account of staged and choreographed car accidents furnished by a narrator named as James Ballard; its opening paragraph is also a reportage of his comrade Vaughan's death by accident: 'Vaughan died yesterday in his last car-crash. During our friendship he had rehearsed his death in many crashes, but this was his only true accident' (6)[486]. From the outset, Ballard outlines the tenuous function of the real in this accident obsessed world. It is Vaughan's first real accident because it fully materialises, with angular precision, the choreographed vision he has previously held of the accident, alongside fantasised depictions of the actress Elizabeth Taylor. Thus, in the world of *Crash*, the "real" car collision is not a reality by coincidence or chance, but it is real only by virtue of manifesting an image that Vaughan has already staged many times before on film sets. This is a hyperreal universe where the unit of the real has been supplanted by an image that has to adhere to the imagined and manufactured scenarios of chromium wounds:

> In his vision of a car-crash with the actress, Vaughan was obsessed by many wounds and impact– by the dying chromium and collapsing bulkheads of their two cars meeting head– on in complex collisions endlessly repeated in slow-motion films, by the identical wounds inflicted on their bodies, by the image of windshield glass frosting around her face as she broke its tinted surface like a death-born Aphrodite, by the compound fractures of their thighs impacted against their handbrake mountings, and above all by the wounds to their genitalia, her uterus pierced by the heraldic beak of the manufacturer's medallion, his semen emptying across the luminescent dials that registered for ever the last temperature and fuel levels of the engine. (7)

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484 Crip grotesque denotes the limning of disabled characters as being endowed with both horrific aesthetics, and mystical and mythic powers.

485 Mitchell, David T., and Snyder, Sharon L. *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2000. Web.

486 Ballard, J. G. *Crash*. Harper Perennial, 2008. Print.

The perverse eroticism of wounds carries special significance in that it epitomises the ultimate union of flesh and blood with technology. Baudrillard reads it as technology's 'mortal deconstruction of the body' (75)[487] in which the former exceeds its functionality and becomes an erotic "extension of death", thereby completely erasing the body to herald a future where "symbolic wounds" of "savage and continual surgery" (75)[488] by technology produce a "body without organs"– devoid of subjectivity and subjecthood– 'under the shining sign of a sexuality without a referential and without limits' (75)[489]. This is also apparent in Vaughan's obsession with myriad scenarios of wounding in which he has not always been involved:

> Trying to exhaust himself, Vaughan devised a terrifying almanac of imaginary automobile disasters and insane wounds - the lungs of elderly men punctured by door handles, the chests of young women impaled by steering-columns, the cheeks of handsome youths pierced by the chromium latches of quarter-lights. For him these wounds were the keys to a new sexuality born from a perverse technology. (15)

This instantiates Baudrillard's interpretation that car crashes in the novel are symbolic of relentless sexuality and deconstruction of the body– but only if deconstruction is seen to signify interpenetration and disfigurement. The glitch in Baudrillard's understanding is that he sees car accidents as the triumph of technology over mortality, and thus forgoes the author Ballard's vision for whom car crashes are not the triumph of technology over mortality, but rather signify the violent culmination of life. The sexuality or perverse eroticism with technology only lasts until the organs are brutally punctured and diffused by metal: in this, *Crash* offers no promise of an extended sexuality and birth of a new organism post collision, but instead sketches a dismal picture of contorted, defaced bodies that sacrificed themselves after encounters with insidious seductive images of the perverse "eroticism of wounds" (13)[490].

Intriguingly enough, such instances position *Crash* as an unconventional fantasy fiction, because it deconstructs fantasy by placing fantasy against itself. Rosemary Jackson writes of fantasy as an inversion of the familiar "elements of the world" that recombine into new relations with each other and produce 'something strange, unfamiliar, apparently new, absolutely other and different' (8)[491]. She situates fantasy within the 'hinterland of the real and the imaginary world' (35), where the former

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487 Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press, 1994. Web.

488 Ibid,.

489 Ibid,.

490 Ballard, J. G. *Crash*. Harper Perennial, 2008.

491 Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy : the Literature of Subversion.* Routledge, 1988. Print.

alludes to the experienced real world, and the latter to a 'trance like state [where one] sees an imaginary world' (35). This aligns fittingly with the structural organisation of fantasy in *Crash*, in which Ballard unfolds a real "technological landscape" encompassing "rilling stations", "supermarkets", and a "circular motorway" swelling with the immense panorama of "motion sculpture" which appears so overwhelming to the narrator that he begins to 'reorientate [him]self again round its reassuring bulk, its familiar perspectives of speed, purpose and direction' (68). Ballard situates a parallel fantasy world in the reveries of its inhabitants who, in a bid to find a foothold in this directionless, speedy, and metallic landscape, nurture fantasies of control, presence and complete melding with the landscape. Thus, in *Crash*, the fantasy world is not to be found as a separate material space within the real contours of a lived one, rather it is a purely mental landscape that is twice unhinged from reality.

The contention that fantasy is twofold removed from experienced reality is instantiated by the dearth of unmediated experiences. On close reading we find that all action in the novel is either choreographed by, or mediated through technology, or witnessed from balconies and across car screens and rear-view mirrors. Even the first unplanned accident– that of the narrator– in the novel first appears to be an improvised spectacle in the "theatre of technology":

> For a moment I felt that we were the principal actors at the climax of some grim drama in an unrehearsed theatre of technology, involving these crushed machines, the dead man destroyed in their collision, and the hundreds of drivers waiting beside the stage with their headlamps blazing. (28)

The paraxiality of the hyper-real is evident in the fact that there is no place for the real in the sensibilities of the protagonist– that is, rehearsed or unrehearsed, the accident, in its initial blow, fails to break the spell of fantasy. This is because the protagonists do not operate in the world as it is, but as they think it is and fantasise how it ought to be. By imbricating the imaginary fantastical in both the background and foreground of the narrative, Ballard not only subverts the established tenet of fantasy fiction, which as Todorov remarks 'postulates the existence of the real, the natural, the normal, in order to attack it subsequently' (173)[492], but in so doing also inverts the function of fantasy in fantasy fiction by exposing it in order to critique it. In *Crash*, Ballard constructs the critical and crucial position of the real by making it erupt out of and within the tapestry of the hyper-real and fantastical. This transpires in the representation of the first confrontation with real embodied injury in which Ballard astutely compares the fantasy and reality of "technical scarrings" incurred after a car crash.

492 Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973. Print.

Immediately following his accident, the narrator– James Ballard himself– observes the unfolding of his corporeal wounds where blood, mucous, pain, fractures and scars form an abject trajectory of injuries, completely displaced from the glamorous logic of technologized sexuality:

> The crash was the only real experience I had been through for years. For the first time I was in physical confrontation with my own body, an inexhaustible encyclopedia of pains and discharges, with the hostile gaze of other people, and with the fact of the dead man. (54)

The novel is suffused with descriptions of disabilities following on from car crash injuries; James enumerates the amputation of an elderly woman who was run over by a cycling child– 'her right leg had been amputated, and she now spent all her time folding a silk scarf around the small stump, tying and re-tying the ends as if endlessly wrapping a parcel' (58). There is also a detailed account of a social worker's spinal cord injury post-accident:

> On her legs were traces of what seemed to be gas bacillus scars, faint circular depressions on the kneecaps … On the sofa beside her was a chromium metal cane. As she moved I saw that the instep of each leg was held in the steel clamp of a surgical support. From the over-rigid posture of her waist I guessed that she was also wearing a back-brace of some kind. (158)

This confrontation with the reality of the battered body not only ruptures the fantasy of mutilation by technology, that Baudrillard describes as 'a semiurgy of contusions, scars, mutilations, wounds that are so many new sexual organs opened on the body' (75)[493], but also puts forth the embodied, "anatomical and physiological"[494] repercussions of a car crash, which are more real and potent than the "eroticism of wounds". Contra Baudrillard, these renderings do not beckon to a new sexuality where each wound is a new erogenous zone, rather they highlight the grim reality of an accident that would most likely leave one brutally incapacitated rather than abundantly eroticised. This also aligns with the phenomenological underpinnings of surgical wounds and incisions, which leaves one ever more –not less– mindful of the limitations and organismic status of their body. Sobchack recounts her experience of a thigh surgery that leaves a twelve inch scar on her left distal thigh. In parodying

493 Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press, 1994.Web.

494 Ibid,.

Baudrillard's stance, she writes about her encounter with the contours and oozing fluids of her body and realises that eroticism is not even a negligible part of this traction:

> There's nothing like a little pain to bring us (back) to our senses, nothing like a real (not imagined) mark or wound or artificial orifice to counter Baudrillard's postmodern romanticism. I'm writing this intervention recuperating from major cancer surgery on my left distal thigh-a 12-inch scar marking the "new" place of an "artificial invagination" where, for five hours, "chrome and mucous membranes" converged. Indeed, my thigh is marked by several experiences of the "brutal surgery" that technology "continually performs in creating incisions, excisions, scar tissue, gaping body holes"; it is a thigh "dominated by gash marks, cut-outs, and technical scars". But it is definitely not a thigh "without organs", nor do I contemplate it now, as it hurts me, "under the gleaming sign of a sexuality" that is without referentiality and without limitations. (328)[495]

Such phenomenological and literary accounts of surgical interventions, incisions and accidents limn the "real Reality" (Sacks,] 20)[496] of injuries, which is far beyond the hyper-real fantasy of bodily erasure. Oliver Sacks's memoir, *A Leg to Stand On (1986)* evinces an analogous experience of his fall from a short cliff in a hiking accident which renders him an "internal amputee". Sacks's leg was severely wounded after the accident: the bones, tendons and muscles were completely ruptured; however, the severity of the situation is amplified when the leg starts to heal but remains inert despite Sacks's best efforts to flex it. Being a neurologist himself, he realises that his inner body image has abandoned ownership of the leg, so that, notwithstanding its physical presence, the leg has become an "alien", 'functionless and indeed defunct limb' (83) [497] for him. The grim condition is alleviated after years of physiotherapy and much trial and error, but nonetheless, the unnerving vulnerability of his once strong muscular body comes in all its vigour when the psychical limb loss leaves Sacks "virtually helpless" and temporarily crippled. This memoir is particularly intriguing because alongside the physical hurt sustained post-accident, it also reveals the unsettling consequences of the psyche obliterating the body from its embodied corpus in utter indifference to human will and manifest physicality.

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495 Sobchack, Vivian. "Baudrillard's Obscenity." Science Fiction Studies, vol. 18, no. 3, 1991, pp. 327–329.

496 Sacks, Oliver W. *A Leg to Stand On.* Picador, 1986. Print.

497 Ibid,.

Katherine Dunn's fantasy fiction *Geek Love* (1989) also upends this paradigm by interpolating conscious human will into the processes of physical amputation. *Geek Love* is an uncanny depiction of voluntary experimentations with the body; bioengineering; crip powers; and the rise of a maimed cult called the Arturians. The inclusion of volition in maiming and physical amputations imparts reflexivity to the central axiom of the narrative– 'a true freak cannot be made. A true freak must be born' (50)[498]. The plot revolves around the Binewski family comprising: Al and Crystal Lil, the owners of a travelling freakshow company who engineered their five offspring to carry exotic physical deformities, namely: the eldest Arturo, he has flippers instead of limbs; Olympia, the hunchbacked albino; Electra and Iphegenia, the joint Siamese twins; and Fortunato, the only typical bodied baby but with telekinetic powers. The storyline is a poignant rendition of two forms of antagonism: one that functions between the disabled and able-bodied, and the other within and among disabilities– in turn sketching the hierarchical tension between exotic and more mundane conditions. The latter is evident in the reception and status of each disabled member of the Binewski family. Starting in a descending order, the stalwart of the freak show comprises:

> Their firstborn … Arturo, usually known as Aqua Boy. His hands and feet were in the form of flippers that sprouted directly from his torso without intervening arms or legs. He was taught to swim in infancy and was displayed nude in a big clear-sided tank like an aquarium. (26)

He has brought the maximum number of spectators to the show and has gradually evolved into a linchpin. His fame is followed by the:

> Siamese twins with perfect upper bodies joined at the waist and sharing one set of hips and legs. They usually sat and walked and slept with their long arms around each other. They were, however, able to face directly forward by allowing the shoulder of one to overlap the other. They were always beautiful, slim, and huge-eyed. They studied the piano and began performing piano duets at an early age. Their compositions for four hands were thought by some to have revolutionized the twelve-tone scale. (26)

The bottom of the pecking order is occupied by Oly, the narrator, and her younger brother Fortunato. Oly describes her disabilities as "regular", and 'too humdrum to be marketable on the same scale as

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498 This is a revision and an inversion of Simone de Beauvoir's phrase from *The Second Sex* " One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (26). Beauvoir, Simone , and H M. Parshley. *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, U.K: Penguin Books, 1949. Print.

Dunn, Katherine. *Geek Love*. New York: Knopf, 1989. Print.

my brother's and sisters'' (26). Due to the sheer normalcy of her physical deformities Oly always feels insignificant and useless; akin to La Vache, she is the un-thinged individual of her family. This suit is followed by Fortunto, who:

> Despite the expensive radium treatments incorporated in his design … had a close call in being born to apparent normalcy. That drab state so depressed [the] enterprising parents that they immediately prepared to abandon him on the doorstep of a closed service station as [they] passed through Green River, Wyoming, late one night. (27)

In tracing a hierarchical genealogy of disabilities, Dunn inverts the order of Extropian eugenics, where in lieu of super-human transcendence, now extreme engineered disabilities occupy centre stage. David Mitchell argues that 'such defining distinctions allow Dunn to parallel the mythic fascination of physical difference that accrues around the "freak" to the more mundane experiences of individuals with disabilities' (150)[499]; to this, he adds that such a delineation 'mires [the] characters and readers [of *Geek Love*] in the *literality* of bodily metaphorics' (147), where the intended and experimental bodily transformations occur in a starkly literal fashion in the narrative. However acute this insight may be, however, it does not investigate the distorted and unattainable image of the freak in the novel, nor the insidious aspects of this fascination. Right at the outset, Dunn imbricates *Geek Love* with fascination, falsification and sinister utilitarianism. The novel opens with Al recounting the story of Lil Crystal's geek days– the time she performed in Al's carnival fabulon– their declining business, and the desperate need to 'breed one's own freak show' (24):

> Times were hard and, through no fault of young Al's, business began to decline. Five years after Grandpa died, the once flourishing carnival was fading.
>
> Al was a standard-issue Yankee, set on self-determination and independence, but in that crisis his core of genius revealed itself. He decided to breed his own freak show.
>
> My mother, Lillian Hinchcliff, was a water-cool aristocrat from the fastidious side of Boston's Beacon Hill, who had abandoned her heritage and joined the carnival to become an aerialist … It was this passion that made her an eager partner in Al's scheme. She was willing to chip in on any effort to renew public interest in the show. Then, too,

499Mitchell, David T, and Sharon L. Snyder. *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001. Print.

> the idea of inherited security was ingrained from her childhood. As she often said, "What greater gift could you offer your children than an inherent ability to earn a living just by being themselves?"
>
> The resourceful pair began experimenting with illicit and prescription drugs, insecticides, and eventually radioisotopes. My mother developed a complex dependency on various drugs during this process, but she didn't mind. Relying on Papa's ingenuity to keep her supplied, Lily seemed to view her addiction as a minor by-product of their creative collaboration. (24–25)

Dunn traces the origin of extraordinary disabilities in privation and the desire to breed mythic freaks whose embodiments do not subscribe to the realm of the possible. The "allure for the grotesque" that Mitchell alludes to, is not entirely the fascination for disabilities, rather it is directed towards unrealistic embodiments. This is ostensible in the intrafamilial dynamics where segregation between the most and least lucrative sibling is dictated by a single criterion, namely: whose materiality converges most potently with the mythic? Arturo occupied the uppermost niche of the spectrum not for his limbless body but for the flippers that supplanted his limbs. In so being, he becomes a fantasy figure who is not just disabled or impaired but is also the pivot at which the mythological becomes the real. His station as the 'aqua boy' supersedes that of his siblings– the Siamese twins and Olympia– because unlike him, they constitute real and possible disabilities. Hence slightly diverging from David Mitchell's understanding that *Geek Love* self-consciously demonstrates the appeal for the physically aberrant, this reading contends that the novel acts out our fascination for and pull towards the unrealistic and fantastic. Dunn charts out the peak of this enthrallment in Book Three of the novel which traces the emergence of Arturo's cult– the Arturans/ Arturism. The inception of the said cult occurrs with Alma Witherspoon's plea to cut off her toes and eventually all her limbs. She is a twenty-two-year-old obese woman, who for fear of being jilted by her pen pal lover– who had never seen her– begs Arturo to chop off her limbs and make her in his own image. Later on, she rigorously campaigns for this cause:

> The thing grew. Arty's fans– or the "Admitted," as Alma insisted on calling them– began to trail after the show in cars and vans and trailers of their own. From a half-dozen simple characters wandering the midway with white bandages where fingers or toes had been, there grew a ragtag horde camped next to the show everyplace we stopped. Within three years the caravan would string out for a hundred miles behind us when we moved. (365).

The voluntarily maimed Arturans predominantly comprise the "unemployed and illiterate" and those "norms"– able bodied citizens– who were seeking social exclusion through "exclusivity". The stringent eligibility measures provide a glimpse of the targeted prey of Arturo's predatory and egomaniacal gambit:

'The more people we exclude, the more people will want to join. That's what exclusive means.'

INELIGIBLE FOR ADMISSION	GROUNDS
Convicted Felons	Already freaks
Mentally Deranged or Retarded	Unable to make informed decision
Under Age 21 (later 25)	Unable to make informed decision
Over Age 65	Already freaks
Chronically Ill	Already freaks
Congenitally Deformed	Already freaks
Accidentally Mutilated	Already freaks (453)

The horrid grotesquery of voluntary amputations– performed under the pretext of freeing people from pain– is fraught with malpractices, violence and exploitation. This is conspicuous in Arturo extracting large sums of money by way of an acceptance fee into the cult; in the fact that some amputations are performed involuntarily like that of Doctor Phyllis; in the invidious manipulation of the crowds to feed a self-aggrandizing ego; and in Electra's enforced lobotomy on Arturo's mandate. The grotesquery of these acts is increased when, due to the precipitous increase in the number of Arturans, an unnerving disposal system is put into place: Sanderson, one of the members of the cult, collects the human detritus, chopped it into finer parts and stored, and hangs them in pint jars on the "hooks behind the trailer". He picks out the maggots as they are hatched and sells 'a lone maggot with its own lifetime supply of guaranteed sanctified feed for five dollars. The ones that graduated to fly hood before he could sell them went to the Fly Roper's wire cage on a dollar-a-dozen basis' (398). Akin to the "creative collaboration" of the Binewski couple– which was gravid with poisonous insecticides, drugs and addiction– the by-product of Arturism is rife with equally abject biological detritus.

Katheryn Hume, in "Conjugations of the Grotesque" interprets the amplification of horrifying spectacles in *Geek Love* as conjuring up a mythological apocalyptic landscape; she insists that this grotesquery be read as the disruption of 'the evangelical fundamentalism … by the intrusion of new myth (Arty as savior) producing grotesque amputees who pattern themselves on their leader' (89)[500]. In so claiming, Hume situates Dunn as a writer of "anti-orderly values" who tends to extol chaos and 'see damnation as inhering to the side of law and order' (114). Like Mitchell, she pronounces *Geek Love* as adhering to the classical canon which often paraded disabled bodies as the true "freaks". An alternative intervention to these canonical readings suggests that Dunn's innovation within the tradition of the grotesque lies in adding a touch of the magical and unrealistic to Arturo's disabilities. This carves out a lacuna in which Dunn dismantles the construct of the freak and self-consciously literalises its fantasy status, in turn delineating how a true freak can be neither made nor born[501], for it is a mythic image whose right place is in metaphors and fiction and not in reality. Contra Hume's assertion, Dunn's intention is not to side with "anti-orderly values" but to demonstrate the hefty price of materialising fantasies of bodily dissolution and of "enfreaking" oneself in pursuit of a vacuous horizon promising "peace, isolation and purity"– the tagline of Arturo's pamphlets. Although the current study concurs with Mitchell's remark that *Geek Love* 'provides a space within which to interrogate the mythic packaging that designs our desires' (Mitchell 162)[502], it diverges from his stance in claiming that these desires are not effectuated by "anomalous" disabled corporeality, but are instead stoked by the spectacle of the preternatural, superhuman, and the fabulous and imaginary.

In stark contrast to his siblings, it is only Arty's body and enactments that cater to the audience's yearning to fashion themselves after the unusual: this is because this craving goes beyond the simple pull of the carnivalesque spectacle in that it summons avenues for exclusivity and assimilation as well as redemption from insecurities and the pell-mell concerns of life. Dunn continually pushes her readers to acknowledge the insidious side of such fantasies by puncturing the narrative with the real consequences of experimenting with and self-mutilating the body. This is discernible in the miserably inert lives of voluntary amputees at Arturo's rest home:

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500 Hume, Kathryn. *Aggressive Fictions: Reading the Contemporary American Novel.* 2012. Web.

501 Dunn deconstructs both sides of the inverted truism pivoting the novel: "because a true freak cannot be made. A true freak must be born" (50).

502Mitchell, David T, and Sharon L. Snyder. *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001. Print.

> Those who become ineligible for progress are sent there quicker but are pitied for having lost access to P.I.P. Those who complete progress (are reduced to head and torso) go to the rest homes with full honors– living, no doubt, the lives of gold-plated pumpkins: bathed, fed, and wheeled around by servants. (454)

Thus, both *Geek Love*, and *Crash* operate within the framework of fantasy only to disrupt and infringe it with a model of the "real Real", thereby grounding the narrative in a parallel form of mundane lived reality whose gamut of accommodations to our overextended fantasies and "creative collaborations" is actually quite limited. Such delineations throw a hint of caution by beckoning us to the flimsy but by no means insignificant demarcation between rehabilitative and alienating forms of bodily and cognitive plasticity. This in turn evokes the question of how much and to what extent can we benignly utilise Clark's ideas of "supersizing the mind" and "natural born cyborgs" without uprooting our foothold in lived embodied realities? The forthcoming section aims to throw light on this by analysing hyper–materiality and embodied malleability under the rubrics of cyborgism and ethical anthropocentrism. To this end, the object of the concluding section is directed towards establishing the frontiers of expressive prosthesis to ascertain the scope available for personal experiences and possibilities of design to intermingle.

Expressive Prosthesis: A Step Towards Cyborgism or Ethical Anthropocentrism?

Luna Dolezal's critique of the 'transhumanist … imaginary of morphological freedom' explicitly mentions its obliteration of the messy middle: 'the significant physical and existential toll that self-transformation within a medical context can entail' (321)[503]. The present chapter has attempted to bridge the heuristic lacunae – "the physical and existential toll"– pervading this landscape, but nonetheless, it leaves unexplored the precincts of expressive prosthesis and cognitive plasticity: the very notions it argues for against the current wave of unchecked morphological freedom. Lisa Lynch's memoir, *The C Word* (2010), opens the floor for further discussions in this direction. The memoir is a comprehensive journal of Lynch's experiences with breast cancer diagnosis, mastectomy and subsequent chemotherapy. Owing to its witty and humorous language, the memoir enlivens even the painful, dismal ordeal of ongoing breast cancer treatment. After losing her breast and hair to mastectomy and chemotherapy, Lynch embarks on the odyssey of finetuning her prosthetic breast and mastectomy bra, and finding the right wig. On the former, Lynch has rather disenchanting views:

503 Whitehead, Anne, Woods, Angela, Atkinson, Sarah J., Macnaughton, Jane, and Richards, Jennifer. *The Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities*. 2016. Print.

> Believe me, this brassiere is no Agent Provocateur contender…What the bra does have, however, is a handy little pocket to house the prosthetic boob that I'm currently sporting (keep an eye out for them next Fashion Week). It's round and foamy and stuffed with lambswool, and it feels a bit like a novelty clown's nose (honk honk) And while I'm thankful for it in the meantime so I don't have to look all wonky-chested in my high-necked clothes, I'll be more enthusiastic when we can eventually get round to the fun of inflating my currently flat saline implant. (That said, it'll be limited fun– it's only got my usual B-cup level to imitate, so we'll hardly be putting it to the Dolly Parton test.)
>
> It's off-white (naturally, it doesn't come in any other colours) with wide straps and nondescript flowers embroidered onto it, the like of which you'd normally see on a naff B & B bedspread. This bra is all the proof you need that the medical world just ain't used to dealing with breast cancer in twenty-somethings. It is the anti-sexy. (107-08)[504]

This excerpt brings to the fore the exigent demand for medical artefacts that incorporate invitations to the creative involvement of fashion designers[505] while in the same vein it also beckons to sustaining the participation of medical practitioners and patients alike in order to ensure a balanced collaboration where both creativity and mechanical precision can blend together and co-operate. The incorporation of different colours and design schemes will serve to alleviate the drab aesthetic of the bra; simultaneously, adjustments according to the size and weight of the prosthetic breast will ensure that biomechanical accuracy is practiced throughout. Lynch's assertion that her implants for breast reconstruction surgery cannot exceed a certain size is evidence that the procedure in question does not align with unrestrained glamour, transcendence, or simulation, but with the boundaries demarcated by her body.

Analogously, Lynch's wig shopping experience is a disorienting one because, in synchrony with the mastectomy bra provided by the NHS, the aesthetic of the wigs seems unappealing and imbued with echoes of dotage and illness:

> The NHS being the NHS, there was zero sense of style in the process … The stationery cupboard had very high shelves displaying mannequin heads with truly awful hairdos … The lower shelves were home to an ancient-looking radio buried among lots of boxes

504 Lynch, Lisa. *The C Word.* Essex: Arrow Books, 2010. Print.

505 Graham Pullin's argument in *Disability Meets Design,* quoted earlier in the chapter.

> containing wigs that had been ordered for other patients. I had a sneaky look and noticed that most of them were grey– another reminder of the lottery-winning odds of getting The Bullshit at my age. (168)

These excerpts unveil the indifferent stance that the NHS maintains in avoiding any promulgation of an alliance between bespoke fashion and embodied technology and accessories. What has come out of this study as a whole is the need for a case to be made for "expressive prosthesis" in disability design and, as part of this case, the need for its undergirding with an ethically informed anthropocentric foundation that acknowledges individual body-image, desires and demands while also acknowldging the need to evaluate its feasibility. Such an anthropocentric approach might become the herald of a more egalitarian and collaborative interaction between prosthesis wearers and their prosthetists, thereby transforming the cyborgian anthropomorphic into phenomenologically embedded anthropocentric modes of prosthetisation. Moreover, the intervention of a fashion stimulated perspective will add a novel dimension to what Steven Kurzman calls technologization– 'in a sense, technologization is about the embodied dialogue between the experience of prostheses and the observation of their biomechanical interaction with bodies, and how prosthetists and amputees communicate across this gap' (245)[506]– in which bespoke fashion shall have a vital purchase in the "embodied dialogue" of technologization– potentially opening a portal for translating embodied technology into stylish accessories and appendages, not "enchanted matter"[507].

506 Ott, Katherine, Serlin, David, and Mihm, Stephen. *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives : Modern Histories of Prosthetics*. New York: New York UP, 2002. Print.

507 For more on Enchanted Materialism please refer to chapter three.

Conclusion: The Entanglements of Body-Machine Linkages in Fiction and Non-fiction

> The body may seem to have been left out of this equation, but one can still say that its articulations serve as the model for the mechanical; that the mechanical is more readily identifiable in the body than elsewhere in the physical world. (Wills, 27-28)[508]

If David Wills detects the primal impulse of the mechanical in the body, then this thesis continually avows to seek, pinpoint and unearth in and out of the body multifarious animations of hyper-reflexivity, malleability, resistance, failure and persistence. In harbouring such qualities, the body becomes a substrate from which one might begin to trace the emergence of entanglements between the human and prosthetic. Here entanglement is not the Deleuzian addition of independent complete units forming a constellation and/or system[509]; neither is it any haphazard enmeshing of contingent elements forming a functional unit or machine[510]; nor is it Latour's active network of non-human agents[511]. Instead, the entanglements that the concluding section corroborates arise out of Karen Barad's proposition of entanglements as non-additive linkages that intra-act with each other to produce and reconfigure agency, materiality, and patterns of diffractions– or differences– that matter. Crucially, for Barad, the matter of differences hinges on the mattering of those differences: 'it is a commitment to understanding which differences matter, how they matter, and for whom' (Barad 90)[512]. The convolutions of her statement start to unfurl once we recapitulate the singular thematic focus of this thesis which is to reflect on the matter of body-machine entanglements and the evolving trajectory of differences they manifest, craft, configure and reconfigure.

The critical trajectory of this thesis began by first navigating the most rudimentary structures of body–technology permutations and combinations. Foremost in this inquiry was Samuel Beckett's novels and plays, potent texts for embarking on an understanding of the positionality of the body in the larger canvas of augmentations and prosthetisation. To this end, Beckett's texts have been of vital significance, for they vehemently manifest the primacy of the body– imbued with the instinct to move– at every step of the way. The thesis has investigated *Murphy, Watt, Molloy, Malone Dies,* and *The*

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508 Wills, David. *Prosthesis.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1995. Print.

509 For more on this, refer to: Žižek, Slavoj. *Organs without Bodies : Deleuze and Consequences*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus : Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1987. Print.

510 This is a concept of quantum physics and has gained much traction in contemporary understanding of epistemological systems. Get more information in: Jaeger, Gregg. *Entanglement, Information, and the Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics.* Berlin; New York: Springer, 2009. Frontiers Collection. Web.

Rainer Blatt. "Quantum Mechanics: Entanglement Goes Mechanical." Nature 459.7247 (2009): 653-4. Web.

511 Latour's concept has been critiqued at length in chapter 3 of this thesis.

512 Barad, Karen Michelle. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning.* Durham, NC ; London, England: Duke UP, 2007. Print.

Unnameable with an eye to simply following the devolution and/or creaturisation of the eponymous protagonists from walking, staggering, limping, strutting, funambulating creatures to squirming, crawling, bedridden and prostrate organisms. What has emerged from these delineations is that embodied movement is the very kernel of human animation– itself gravid with consciousness, hyper reflexivity, failure, persistence, creativity, and even resistance to habit formation and societal norms. Also intertwined in Beckett's locomotory narratives is a vast array of objects– namely rocking chair, bicycle, umbrella– and manual assistive technology– like crutches, sticks, and wheelchair– each manipulated in myriad exhaustive ways to support ambulation, bodily oscillations and to sustain haptic contact with the world. By consolidating various tools and modes of motion this study has demonstrated that, in his novels, Beckett not only prioritises the body over words, characterisation and plotline, but also attends both overtly and covertly to an ethics of disabilities unveiling the "epistemic injustices"[513] and "heuristic gaps"[514] that have become fraught areas for debate in mainstream discussion.

Beckettian topoi of the primacy of the body and its protean nature also traverse his drama where the echoes of the suffering, ailing body intra-act with the immediacy of performance. Here setting, lighting, dramatic personae and objects constitute and re-constitute multi-sensorial linkages of embodied spatio-temporality across the visual and acoustic landscapes**.** This is discernible in the rigorous deployment of the "frozen tableaux" in which the characters do not simply stop, thereby prolonging time and establishing their spatial stasis, rather they freeze the movement of time and space itself, in turn suspending the continuation of the space-time spectrum. The uncanny effect of such immobilization is the visual and auditory locking of embodied action to suggest individualized finitude, and non-assimilationist attributes of each character– resounding with Hamm's remark: "Everyman his speciality" (97)[515]. This dialectical approach is further strengthened by the employment of tools and objects– namely, sticks, wheelchairs, telescope, gaffe, ladder, hats, boots, glasses, handbag, parasol, rope, stool etc.,– in both theater and radio plays, since they concede to function as the sole arbiters of haptic contact of the "pseudo-couples" with each other– albeit a violent one– and with their respective surroundings. Beckett bequeaths to each of his dramatic characters his or her respective tools; not only do they never share them with each other, but also use their things to draw the confines of their zones of active existence: Winnie, Hamm, Pozzo and Lucky, and A and B in *Rough for Theatre1* are illustrations of this tendency. Consequently, such intra-actions evoke the

513 This is Havi Carell's conceptualisation of *The Phenomenology of Illness*.

514 This tool is from Havi Carell's book *The Phenomenology of Illness*.

515 Beckett, Samuel. *The Complete Dramatic Works*. London: Faber, 1986. Print.

audiences' perceptions of differentiations between different kinds of embodiment which individualise Beckett's characters. This process can be seen to counter Lennard Davis's conception of "dis-modernism"[516], thereby also establishing what Steven Connor reads as Beckett's 'jaggedly indigestible … antagonism to linking' (198)[517] or pure assimilation. Resonating with Barad's proposition, these emergent differences between disabilities do matter because they resist impulses towards homogenization and instead reconfigure differentiation between human vulnerability and disabilities on one side, and social and biological models of disabilities on the other.

Like most literary depictions, Beckett's texts engage the highest level of abstraction, in that, they push us towards the bizarre by bringing us to the brink of our phenomenal realities and making us feel and confront things that lie beyond the limit of our experience. Patricia Waugh makes a similar remark in "Afterword: Experiment and Evidence" where she writes about the power and significance of the arts within the medical humanities:

> In the divvying up of the domains of art, science and morality that is the focus of Kant's three great *Critiques*, the function of the model that is a work of art is conceded to be important in allowing humans to bridge the gap between the phenomenal and the noumenal, bringing into existence, through the created imaginary world, the means to glimpse what might exist beyond the limits of the epistemologically known and which has, as yet, no determinable conceptual existence. (157)[518]

Waugh's assertion that art enables and catalyzes an exploration of the epistemologically unknown and conceptually undefined is reinforced by the intra-actions between both fictional and non-fictional texts discernible in Section Two of the current study, which, in addendum to the first, pursues further Beckett's non-assimilationist poetics and its overarching thematics of embodied failure and individualised impairments.

The intra-actions between fiction and autobiography in Chapter Three facilitate a critical comparative study between different textual genres and materialize an understanding of how each work opens different portals to navigate the experiential density of living with assistive devices, namely: crutches, wheelchairs, sticks, hearing aids, frames and hip joint. Fascinatingly, or perhaps counterintuitively, the

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516 It suggests the dissolution of corporeal differences and pronounces disability as a universal norm for all embodiments. Davis, Lennard J. *The Disability Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.

517 Connor, Steven. *Beckett, Modernism and the Material Imagination*. 2014. Web.

518 Whitehead, Anne, Woods, Angela, Atkinson, Sarah J., Macnaughton, Jane, and Richards, Jennifer. *The Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities*. 2016. Print.

confluence of fiction with autobiography is not tantamount to the privileging of one perspective over another, nor is it an antagonistic dismissal of one form of lived reality as less important than another; instead, the brushing together of fictive realities with those of literal autobiographical ones stimulates an enriched and a nuanced perspective on how people wield and live with assistive technology. Concomitantly, both supply ample information on the convoluted process of procuring an assistive device: its cost; machinic dysfunctionalities; and its social limitations. Moreover, what emerges from a comparative analysis of an expansive range of texts is the exigent need to reconceptualize an ethically informed anthropocentrism, that hinges on an appreciation of human subjecthood and objecthood[519] in areas of prosthesis manufacture and design. Martyn Evans, in his article entitled, "Medical Humanities and The Place of Wonder"[520] proposes the place for re-evaluating our materiality in terms of its subjectivity and objecthood where:

> We want to uphold a motivic concern of medical humanities: namely, to redress biomedicine's tendency to objectify patients where that tendency means insufficiently attending to their individuality and their experience. But we also want to avoid replacing one form of reductionism with another, in particular to avoid disregarding or downplaying the objecthood of the patient. One would not wish to deny that patients are also more-than-objects. But to regard medicine's error as viewing the patient as a *mere* object is in a sense to compound that error: no object is a 'mere' object in the dismissive sense of that phrase! What we need is a view of patients that does justice to their personhood and their objecthood alike– and is capable of coping with (if we think it really needs coping with) the taint of dualism that this way of putting the matter enjoins. (350)

Evans's call for an assimilation of both perspectives as being crucial to a well-informed medical humanities approach bears much significance even in the domain of embodied technology where the cultural impetus of cyborgism and the technological "high" has extricated both human subjectivity and materiality from focus. This thesis vehemently demonstrates these proclivities by delineating the tenuous, de–animated status of the human and the ubiquitous anthropomorphisation/ enchantment of machines, in which the ordinary tenets of the human– consciousness, agency, sentience, experiential abilities, choice, failure and persistence– have been allocated to the machinic counterpart. This idiosyncratic turn towards the machine as a living entity is a perverse detour from a

519 Martyn Evans's supposition

520 Whitehead, Anne, Woods, Angela, Atkinson, Sarah J., Macnaughton, Jane, and Richards, Jennifer. *The Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities*. 2016. Print.

phenomenologically cognizant approach to disabilities and technology that this thesis seeks to promote. An outlook that vouches for the failure/ breakdown of prosthetics as their intended revenge on the human manipulator creates a cul-de-sac that inevitably thwarts prospects of crafting more efficacious and affordable technologies. These must continually thrive in response to understanding of dysfunctionalities that is phenomenologically aware and in order to lead to a conceptualization of designs that incorporate a dynamic awareness of the personhood (or subjecthood) and objecthood– comprising kinetic repertoire and biomechanical underpinnings– of the human agent.

By constructing a sustained critique of posthumanism from myriad perspectives this thesis has positioned the human as central to any enquiry into prosthetic technology. In so doing, it propounds a novel epistemic unit termed "ethical anthropocentrism", the tenets of which conform to reinstating the paradigm of individual human limitations in prosthesis design, which would both ameliorate the supercrip fetishisation of disabilities and re-channel the pursuit of transhumanism and hyper-realism towards the more grounded terrain of hyper-materiality and expressive prosthesis. Chapter Four, entitled "Between Transcendence and Simulation: Navigating the Hyper-materiality of Contemporary Prostheses", navigated the feasibility of expressive prosthesis by cautiously positioning it as a bridge that connects medicalised body parts with ergonomics and individual aesthetics. In contradistinction to enchanted materialism, expressive prosthetisation conjoins the individual and the prosthetist in a mutual synchrony, bereft of material vitality and antagonism. Moreover, the multi-generic structure of this chapter imbibes a sundry conglomerate of texts, each stimulating dynamic intra-actions and entanglements between fiction and non-fiction. The confluence of fantasy fiction, short stories, crime thriller, plays, and memoirs weaves a condensed fabric of multitudinous perspectives, the warp and weft of which generate 'exploratory, unpredictable, emergent and world-directed' (Waugh 158)[521] epistemic objects that answer to and question various forms of emergent knowledge within the medical humanities. The deployed texts appeal to a bio-social model of prosthetic technology that is neither celebratory nor solemn on the matter; this model is one that seeks to fill the gulf between these antagonistic critical stances in a bid to make prosthesis an equipment that facilitates rehabilitation and restores functionality of its human wearers without depriving them of their agency, humanity, selfhood, corporeality, limitations and most significantly the right to failure and success without being imprinted as cripples or superhumans.

The discernible entanglements materialised in the textual diversity of the thesis lay bare the immense value of literature and art to the field of bioethics and policy making. The uncanny, abstract worlds

521 Ibid,.

conjured by fiction go against the grain of mimesis; in so doing, they offer nuanced and sophisticated understandings of the human condition that other objective modes of enquiry are less equipped to achieve. In this context, the term "human condition" connotes the elusive dimensions of human existence in its entirety– consolidating the existential, affective, psychological, somatic, social, political and cultural in the highest form of literary expression and thought. If Beckett focuses on the creaturisation of the human, then other texts limn the organismic structure of being human, where our embodiment, relationships, memories, emotions, thoughts, social systems, language, perceptions and points of view perpetually function to reconfigure our "feelings of being"[522] and reorientate us in altered spaces of inhabitancy. Right from the first chapter to the last, this study gives voice to the precise thematic and aesthetic strategies that each literary text deploys and evokes, with the intention to garner multitude linkages and entanglements in order to enrich and inform our understandings of what constitutes our humaneness– rather than our posthumanity. In this thesis we see in the significations of the literary question also the specifically objective and cure-centric approach of medicine, but also the single-minded patient-oriented and care-centric narrative of medical humanities. Literature's concern with the human does not pertain to its favouring one viewpoint over another, instead it seeks to give equal importance to everything that contributes to our complexity. The Foucauldian paradigm of cure v/s care is here rendered dysfunctional and incomplete, in that the former needs to grasp that the loss of mobility or a body part is much more than the loss of pure functionality, while the latter needs to appreciate that purely care driven rehabilitation would be a tenuous and temporary arrangement yielding ineffective results. This is because humans are equally constituted by the objecthood of their materiality which, in the wake of an impairment can be beneficially conceptualised in a medical register directed towards the mitigation of phantom pains and bio-mechanical prosthetisation. For rehabilitation to be potent, the objecthood of materiality needs to coalesce with that of the patient's subjecthood. The entanglements between care and cure; patient and prosthetist; subjectivity and objectivity, may serve to reveal heuristic gaps, implement improvisations, and generate crucial entanglements that would matter for an inclusive healthcare.

In addendum, the autobiographies and memoirs studied in this work contribute to strengthen the aforementioned ethical framework. The deployment of non-fictional phenomenological narratives provides accounts of lived experience that provide a platform from which to evaluate the juxtapositions and complementarities between fiction and non-fiction: how fictional worlds collide and align with the phenomenological world of lived experience. Analogous to literature, the instantiations in the

522 Ratcliffe, Matthew. *Feelings of Being: Phenomenology Psychiatry, and the Sense of Reality*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print. International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry.

memoirs also reveal how individuals are indeed constituted by an array of bio-social and material entwinements that provide a dynamic scaffolding for the proper functioning of our multi-dimensional lifestyle. Perceived in this way, it could be surmised that memoirs lend credence to the articulations of literary texts, functioning not as yardsticks of verifiable reality, but as emblems of potent collaborations between the realms of lived and imaginary truth. The varied manifestations of hyper-reflexivity and failure in both kinds of narrative amplify the rigorous intra-actions between the experiential real–'what is'– of autobiographies, and the nonexperiential, nonepistemic Real–'what might be'– of literature, to make way for the advent of the possible– 'what could be'.

Such entanglements are also fraught with nonconformities, for it must be taken into account that memoirs are imbued with a sense of spatio-temporal immediacy, literality and monothematic specificity that is largely absent in fiction. Since memoirs of impairments delve into factual occurrences, their content seems to reverberate with singularity of theme and urgency. Diverging from a fiction writer, the memoirist mostly does not have the same flexible resource and opportunity to suspend time and space as abstract semantic signifiers, or as fantastical terrains which allow the inexhaustible play of fantasies and illusions. Another substantial difference that readers may spot between fiction and non-fiction is in their methods of signification, in that, the former is more open-ended, multi-thematic and suffused with implicit, obscure meanings which may even escape the cognitive grasp of readers. Given that the real of fiction is inevitably steeped in an experiential substrate of being human as a condition of embodiment that is variously shared that by all readers, it affords our capacity to imagine ourselves into fictitious narrative plots. In memoirs, this kind of projection is more likely to be reined in as these are presented as experiences belonging to a specific individual, who has agency and ownership over them to a degree that impedes or inhibits the kind of existential appropriation and interpretive freedom that fiction affords. However, this claim must not be construed as a declaration of the restrictive and exclusive nature of memoirs, rather it is an attempt to acknowledge the ownership and specificity of lived experiences as distinct narrative strategies beckoning to a new reading ethic contingent upon our immersion in the circumstantial and literal mise-en-scène of autobiographies. This contextual precision enables readers to confront extant and previous medical infrastructures where, unlike the predicaments of Sammy and Paul in *How Late it Was, How Late* (1994) and *Slow Man* (2005) respectively, we are not engaging in an imaginary existential landscape of flawed healthcare, but in a real medical scenario that inundates us with a wealth of helpful information. Each memoir in the thesis furnishes us with data on the actual price, medical formalities, rehabilitative therapies, and the affordances and limitations of individual prosthetic devices and contemporary public health. Such urgency of information provision reveals areas of medical

infrastructure that demand exigent transformations that might be useful in directing biotechnological innovations towards an inclusive and a responsible present and future. This goes on to show that monothematic and individualised autobiographical experiences of impairments possess equally but differently the potential to engage and implicate readers, not so much by immediate appropriation, but by invoking our interconnectedness with each other in a socially shared world, providing ample evidence that circumstantially specific experiences might be equally relatable and porous without falling into the pitfalls of Murphy-like[523] solipsism.

The intra-actions between different texts gesture to the uniqueness– not wholeness– of each narrative modality, where similarities and dissimilarities engender meaningful linkages and differences gravid with practical utility. This is made evident in the fact that the resonances of literary and non-literary discursive practices permeate the cultural and medical domains of posthumanism and prosthetisation respectively, in which the authors of memoirs and fiction do not conceptualise themselves or their literary characters as less than human or posthuman after their impairment,– even Beckett's creatures follow regression to some primordial state of being– but in fact strive towards their previously attuned existence. Moreover, the technological artefacts– assistive or prosthetic– are configured as utility based functional objects whose success relies upon wielding them with minimal thought and exertion. These vital voices of disagreement against supercrip athletic culture evince a dire need for reconceptualising prosthetics as anthropocentric tools– as opposed to anthropomorphised agential equipment, or metaphorical tropes for the purposes of philosophical thought and social change.

This thesis has sketched the metaphorical underpinnings of the "prosthetic" in contemporary scholarship in which it is constituted as a literal manifestation of the metaphorical artificiality of life[524]; or as motifs to chart out a history of literary deployments of disabled characters as prosthetic vehicles for moral didacticism[525]; and lastly as biographical metaphors[526] to instantiate the supplementary nature of discourse in which conditions of breakage, displacement, stutter and mechanicity influence all discursive practices. Undoubtedly, this study has been shaped by and indebted to the richness of

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523 The eponymous protagonist of Beckett's novel *Murphy,* in which the hero practices deep cogitation by tying himself up to his rocking chair to hermetically seal himself from permeability of information and thought. This has been explored in the First Chapter of the thesis.

524 Boxall, Peter. *The Prosthetic Imagination: A History of the Novel as Artificial Life*. 2020. Web

525 Mitchell, David T., and Snyder, Sharon L. *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Michigan: Ann Arbor, U of Michigan, 2000. Print.

526 Apparent in David Will's perceptive book *Prosthesis* in which he perceptively aligns his father's experiences of a prosthetic leg with the prosthetic nature of all forms of discourse. Wills, David. *Prosthesis*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1995. Print.

ideas evinced in recent scholarship; it is by consolidating and perusing the critical, semantic wealth of these studies that it has been able to trace the literal, phenomenological, and contemporaneous cultural resonances of prostheses in the select primary sources. However, in the process, it also discovered numerous underexplored fields for prospective scholarship: not least of which might be the desirability of more completely tracing a literary history of prosthesis in which they function as embodied tools, not metaphysical metaphors. This inevitably calls for a rigorous cultural and political critique of biomedical technology and its myriad transmutations manifest in non-sci-fi novels, memoirs and case studies. The emphasis on other forms of fiction is rendered all the more propitious due to the exclusive focus of contemporary scholarship on the depictions of prosthesis almost entirely in sci-fi fiction and movies [527] and war novels[528].

In drawing attention to this epistemic lacuna within literary studies of prosthesis, the thesis hopes to make a timely contribution by introducing diverse forms of narratives as equally effective and valid modes for navigating the phenomenological, cultural and biosocial entanglements of the human and the prosthetic. The intention behind this scholarly enterprise is not to challenge, subvert and disrupt established modes of knowledge, but instead to generate interventions, discover missing linkages, abridge gulfs and, most importantly, to provoke pertinent questions concerning the very limits and affordances of complex entanglements of theory with practice and of objecthood with subjecthood within the complex biosociality of human-prosthetic linkages.

527 For more on this check: Stuart Murray's *Disability and the Posthuman: Bodies, Technology, and Cultural Futures*. Liverpool University Press, 2020. *Web.* Katherine Hayles's *How We Became Posthuman : Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics.* Chicago, Ill.: U of Chicago, 1999. Print.

528 Refer to Aaron Shaheen's *Great War Prostheses in American Literature and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford UP USA - OSO, 2020. Web.

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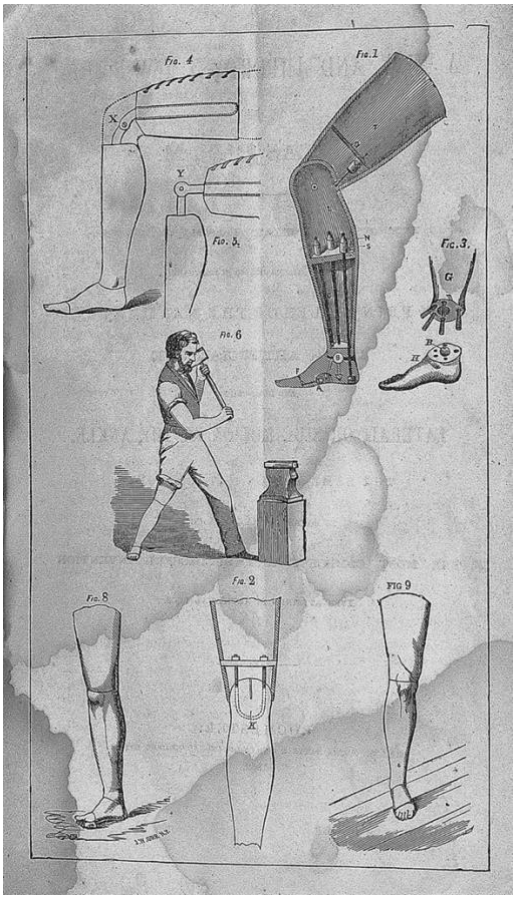
i 

FIG.4.1

A blue Print of Bly's Prosthesis. Taken From Stephen Mihm's essay " Limb Which Shall Be Presentable in Polite Society": Prosthetic Technologies in the Nineteenth Century. *Artificial Parts, Practical Live : Modern Histories of Prosthetics*.

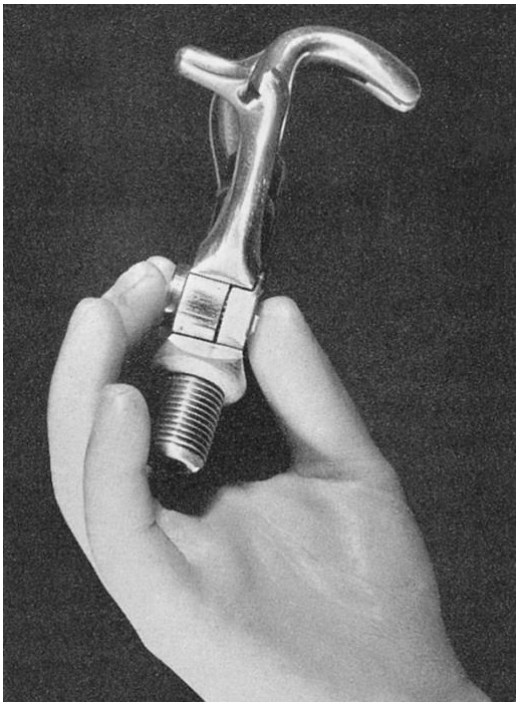
ii 

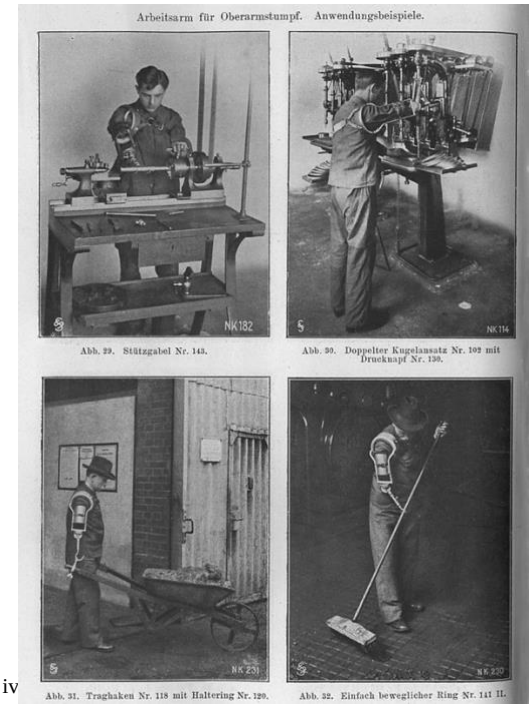
FIG.4.2

In the picture, a prosthetic hand is holding a split hook. This shows the interface of modern technology with its earlier counterpart. It demonstrates the cosmetic and/or physical metamorphoses of prosthetics. The photo is taken from Bess Furman's *Progress in Prosthetics*. Washington, DC: US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1962. Web

iii 

FIG 4.3

This is the Dreyfuss Arm. Originally designed for war veterans who intended to enter a white collar service economy. The design was proposed to the National Research Council in 1948–50. The image has been reproduced from the Henry Dreyfuss Archive. Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Museum. The use of the image comolies with the non–commercial use policy of the Cooper Hewitt Museum. https://www.si.edu/object/henry-dreyfuss-archive%3Achndm_1972-88-1



[iv]

FIG 4.4

The title of the image is “Men at work”. It was originally printed in Adolf Silberstein’s ,“Bein-und Armersatzimkgl. Orthopädischen Reservekazarett zu Nürnberg,” Zeitschrift für orthopädische Chirurgie (1917). In this study it has extracted it from *Artificial Body Parts Practical Lives*. Edited by Katherine Ott, David Serlin, and Stephen Mihm (2002)

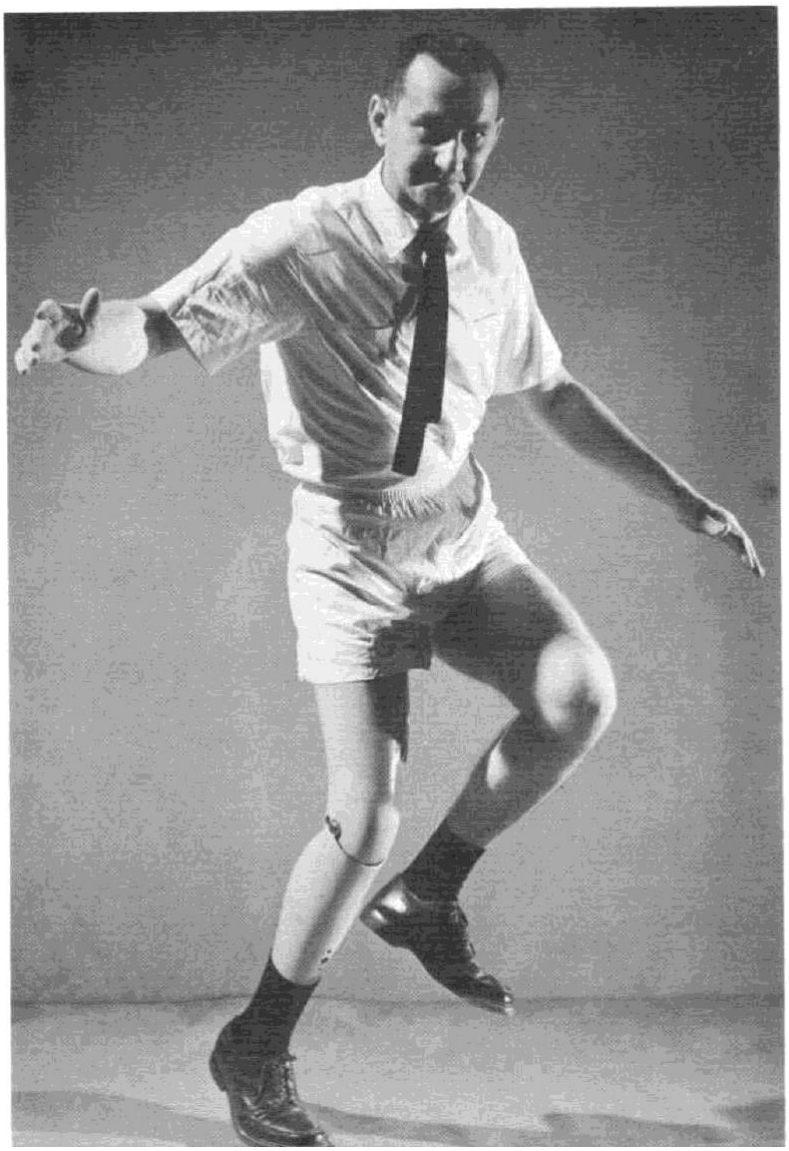
v 

FIG 4.5

The man in the image is wearing a Hans Mauch hydraulic leg. This was developed around 1948–50. The image is taken from Bess Furman, *Progress in Prosthetics.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare,1962. Web.

vi

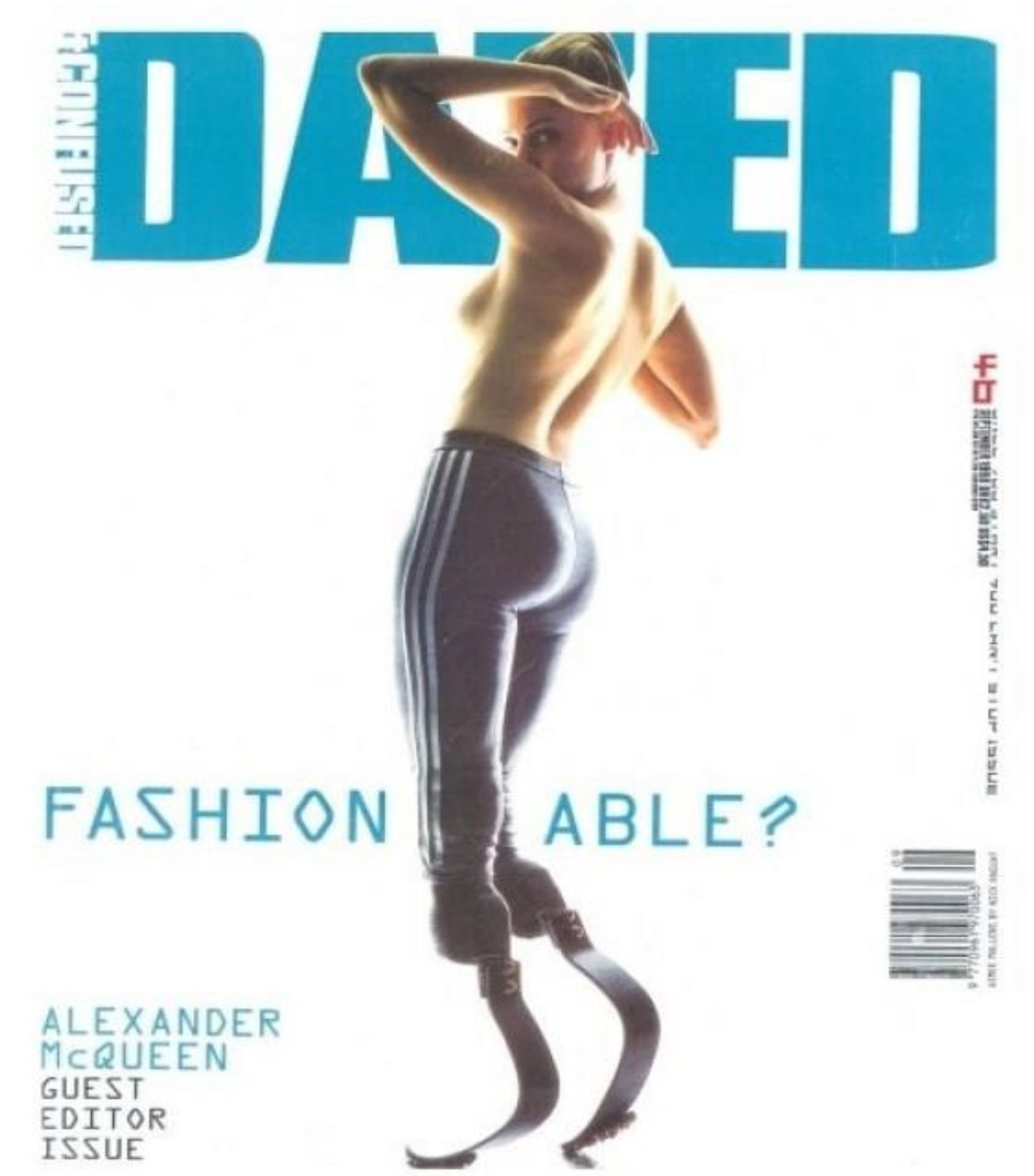


FIG 4.6
Aimee Mullins in Cheetah Legs. For *Dazed and Confused* 1998